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THE
Metropolitan Tabernacle
Pulpit.

SERMONS PREACHED AND REVISED

BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

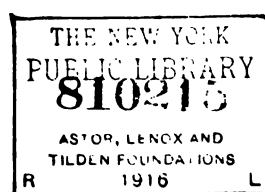
DURING THE YEAR 1874.

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1875.



TO
THE ONE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH
IN
THE TRINITY OF HIS SACRED PERSONS,
BE ALL HONOUR AND GLORY
WORLD WITHOUT END,
AMEN.

TO THE GLORIOUS FATHER, AS THE COVENANT GOD
OF ISRAEL;

TO THE GRACIOUS SON, THE REDEEMER OF HIS PEOPLE;
TO THE HOLY GHOST THE AUTHOR OF
SANCTIFICATION;

BE EVERLASTING PRAISE FOR THAT GOSPEL OF THE
FREE GRACE OF GOD,
HEREIN PROCLAIMED UNTO MEN.

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WASH DC

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

LIFE MORE ABUNDANT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 4TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."—John x. 10.

"THE thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." False teachers, whatever their professions, seriously injure and imperil the souls of men, and in the end cause their destruction; their selfish ends can only be answered by the ruin of their dupes. The Lord Jesus, the true teacher of men, causes injury to none, and brings death to no man's door. His teaching is full of goodness, kindness, and love, and it works most effectually for human happiness and benefit. Error is deadly; truth is life-giving. The coming of the old serpent wrought our death; the advent of the woman's seed has brought us life.

We shall omit all preface, and ask you to note that, according to the text, Jesus Christ is come, first, *that his people may have life*; and, secondly, *that where life is already given it may be enjoyed more abundantly*.

I. The first truth is that JESUS CHRIST HAS COME THAT MEN MAY HAVE LIFE.

I will not dwell upon the thought that even the prolonged natural life of the sinner is due, in a large measure, to the coming of Christ. That barren tree would not stand so long in the garden of life if it were not that the dresser of the vineyard intercedes, and cries, "Spare it yet another year, until I dig about it and dung it." The interposition of the Mediator accounts for the lengthened lives of gross offenders, whose crimes tax the longsuffering of heaven. If the prayers of our great Intercessor should cease for a single hour, the ungodly among mankind would, perhaps, sink down quick into hell, as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram did, when the Lord's anger broke forth upon them. That, however, is not the drift of the text.

Life in the sense of pardon, and deliverance from the death penalty,
No. 1,150.

is the great result of Christ's coming. All men in their natural condition are under sentence of death, for they have sinned, and shortly they must be taken to the place of execution, there to suffer the full penalty of the second death. If any of us are delivered at this time from the sentence of death, and have now the promise of the crown of life, we owe the change to the coming of the Redeemer to be a sacrifice for our sins. Every man among us must go down to the endless death unless, through him who came to earth and hung upon the tree as the sinner's substitute, we obtain full remission for all offences, and the verdict of *life* instead of *death*. Life there is in a look at Jesus, but apart from him the sons of Adam are under sentence of death.

Moreover, we are all by nature "dead in trespasses and sins." In the day when our first parents broke the law they died spiritually, and all of us died in them; and now to-day, apart from Christ, we are all dead to spiritual things, being devoid of that living Spirit which enables us to have communion with God and to understand and enjoy spiritual things. All men are by nature without the Spirit which quickeneth to the highest form of life. Unregenerate men have physical life and mental life, but spiritual life they have not; nor will they ever have it except as Jesus gives it to them. The Spirit of God goes forth according to the divine will, and implants in us a living and incorruptible seed which is akin to the divine nature, and confers on us a new life, by virtue of which we live in the realm of spiritual things, comprehend spiritual teachings, seek spiritual objects, and are alive unto God, who is a Spirit. No one among us has any life of this kind by birth, neither can it be bestowed upon us by ceremonial rites, nor obtained by human merit. The dead cannot rise to life except by miracle, neither can man rise to spiritual life except by the working of the Spirit of God upon him, for he it is who alone can quicken us. Christ Jesus has come to call us from the graves of sin. Many have already heard his voice and live.

This spiritual life is the same life which will be continued and perfected in heaven. We shall not, when we rise again from the grave, obtain a life which we do not possess on earth; we must be alive unto God here, or take our places among those whose worm dieth not and whose fire is not quenched. There beats within the believer's heart this day the selfsame life which shall enjoy the fulness of joy in the divine presence. If you have only looked to Jesus a few minutes ago, yet is there in your heart now the blessed life; the incorruptible seed is sown in you which liveth and abideth for ever. The heavenly life is within you, and this Jesus Christ came to bestow upon us.

The truth that Jesus is the life-giver is clear enough in the text, and it leads to the following practical reflections. Life for your souls is only to be had in Jesus. If, then, you are this day seeking salvation, you are instructed as to the only source of it. Spiritual life is not the result of working; how can the dead work *for* life? Must they not be quickened first, and then will they not rather work *from* life than *for* life? Life is a gift, and its bestowal upon any man must be the act of God. The gospel preaches life by Jesus Christ. Sinner, see where you must look! You are wholly dependent upon the quickening voice of him who is the resurrection and the life. "This,"

saith one, "is very discouraging to us." It is intended so to be. It is kindness to discourage men when they are acting upon wrong principles. As long as you think that your salvation can be effected by your own efforts, or merits, or anything else that can arise out of yourself, you are on the wrong track, and it is our duty to discourage you. The way to life lies in the opposite direction. You must look right away from yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, you must rely upon what he has done and not upon what you can do, and you must have respect not to what you can work in yourself, but to what he can work in you. Remember that God's declaration is that "Whosoever believeth in Jesus *hath* everlasting life." If, therefore, you are enabled to come and cast yourselves upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, you have immediately that eternal life, which all your prayers and tears, repentance, and church-goings, and chapel-goings, and sacraments, could never bring to you. Jesus can give it you freely at this moment, but you cannot work it in yourself. Thou mayest imitate it and deceive thyself, thou mayest garnish the corpse and make it seem as though it were alive, and thou canst galvanise it into a spasmodic motion, but life is a divine fire, and thou canst not steal the flame, or kindle it for thyself; it belongs to God alone to make alive, and therefore I charge thee look alone to God in Christ Jesus. Christ has come that we may have life; if we could have obtained life without his coming, why need he come? If life could come to sinners apart from the cross, why nail the Lord of Glory to the shameful tree? Why thy bleeding wounds, Immanuel, if life could come by some other door? Yet, further, why did the Spirit of God descend at Pentecost, and why does he still abide among men if they can be quickened without him? If life is to be obtained apart from the Holy Spirit, to what end does he work in the human heart? The bleeding Saviour and the indwelling Spirit are convincing proofs that our life is not from ourselves, but from above. Away, then, from thyself, O trembler! Seek not the living among the dead! Search not in the sepulchre of self for the life divine. The life of men is in yonder Saviour, and whosoever believeth in him shall never die.

II. But we intend to spend the most of our time at this time upon the second truth, namely, that JESUS HAS COME THAT THOSE TO WHOM HE HAS GIVEN LIFE MAY HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY.

Life is a matter of degrees. Some have life, but it flickers like a dying candle, and is indistinct as the fire in the smoking flax; others are full of life, and are bright and vehement, like the fire upon the blacksmith's forge when the bellows are in full blast. Christ has come that his people may have life in all its fulness.

Increase of life may be seen in several ways. It may be seen in healing. A man lies sick upon his bed: he is alive, but he can hardly move a limb; he is helplessly dependent upon those around him. His life is in him, but how little is its power! Now, if that man recovers, and rises from his bed, and takes his place in the world's battle, it is evident that he has life more abundantly than in his illness. Even thus there are sick Christians of whom we need to say, "Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees." Their spiritual constitution is weak, they do but little. When the Lord Jesus restores

them, strengthens their faith, brightens their hope, and makes them healthy, then they not only have life, but they have it yet more abundantly. Our Lord desires to have us in spiritual health, he has for that end become the physician of our souls; he healeth all our diseases, and is the health of our countenance.

A person may, however, be in health, and yet you may desire for him more life. Yonder little child, for instance, is in perfect health, but as yet it cannot run alone. Put it upon the ground, it totters a little way, and is ready to fall. Those bones must harden, those muscles must gather strength. When the boy becomes a man, he will have life more abundantly than when he was a babe. We grow in grace, we advance in knowledge, in experience, in confidence, and in conformity to the image of our Lord. From babes in Christ Jesus we advance to young men, and from young men we become fathers in the church. So Jesus would have us grow; this is one of the designs of his coming; thus do we possess life more abundantly.

A person might, however, have both health and growth, and yet enjoy a stinted measure of life. Suppose him to be confined as a prisoner in a narrow cell, where chains and granite walls perpetually bound his motions: can you call his existence life? Might it not be accurate to speak of him as dead while he lives, and to describe his dungeon as a living tomb? Can that be life which is forbidden the pure air, which is the poorest man's estate? denied the sun which shines for all that breathe? He lives, for he consumes that piece of dry bread, and empties the pitcher, daily placed upon the stone floor, but in the truest sense he is shut out from life, for liberty is denied him. When the poor prisoner once more climbs the hill, crosses the ocean's wave, and wanders at his own sweet will, he will gratefully know what it is to have life more abundantly. Now, mark well that if the Son of God shall make you free, you shall be free indeed, and in that freedom find life sparkling, flashing, and overflowing like the streams of a fountain. To be under bondage through fear of death is scarcely life; to be continually fretted with mistrusts, and receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, gendereth unto death; but it is truly life to be able to cry, "Thou hast loosed my bonds!"

Yet I can suppose a man at liberty, and in health, who might have still more abundant life. He is extremely poor, he may wander where he wills, it is true, but no foot of ground can he call his own. He may live where he chooses, if he can live, but he has scarcely bread for his body, covering for his limbs, or shelter from the night-dews; penury pinches him sorely. The poor man works from before the sun proclaims the morning, till far into the night, to earn a miserable pittance. His toil is exacting to the last degree, and his remuneration insufficient to provide necessities; he can scarcely keep body and soul together. Is this life? It is almost a sarcasm so to name it. When we have met with persons compelled to sleep upon the bare floor, or who have for many hours been without a morsel to eat, we have said, "These poor creatures exist, but they do not live." This saying is true. So sometimes there are believers who rather exist than live; they are starving, they do not feed upon the promises; they do not enjoy the rich things which Christ has stored up in the covenant of grace.

When the Lord Jesus enables them to partake of the "fat things full of marrow," and the wines on the lees well refined, then they not only have life, but they have it "more abundantly."

I can still suppose a person who is free, in health, and in the enjoyment of abundance, who needs more life. He is mean and despised, a Pariah, and a castaway. He has none to love him, or look up to him with respect, he does not even respect himself. He slinks along as if the mark of Cain were upon him, he has forgotten hope and bidden farewell to love. You pity such a man every time you think of him. To possess the love and esteem of our fellows is needful if we would live. When under conviction of sin a man has felt himself to be less than nothing, a sinner unworthy to lift his eyes to heaven, a leper fit to be shut up among the unclean, or as a dead man, forgotten and out of mind; then I tell you, by experience, he finds it a mighty addition to his life when the Lord Jesus lifts him up from the dunghill and puts him among princes, even the princes of his people. Brethren, to know that you are no longer a slave, but a son, an heir of heaven, a joint heir with Jesus Christ, for whom the saints are companions and to whom the angels are servitors, this is to have life more abundantly. Is it not?

I have thus hastily hinted at some of the points in which increased life reveals itself. I will now set forth the same subject in another way.

I would lay before you seven particulars in which Christians should seek after more abundant life.

First, let them desire more *stamina*. An embankment is to be thrown up, or a cutting to be dug out. You want labourers. Here are your spades, and your picks, and your wheelbarrows, and the men are required. See, a number of persons offer themselves for hire. They are very thin, they have singularly bright eyes, sunken cheeks, and hollow churchyard coughs—they are a choice company from the Consumptive Hospital. Will you hire them? Why do you look so dubious? These men have life. "Oh, yes," say you, "but I wish they had it more abundantly: they cannot do such work as I have to offer them." We must send these poor men away, they must go to the doctor, and be taken care of. See yonder another band of rough, stalwart fellows! These men will suit your purpose. Look at their ruddy faces, their broad shoulders, their mighty limbs; hand them the picks and the spades and the barrows, and you will see what British navvies can do. What is the difference between the two sets of men, these navvies and those consumptives? Why the difference lies in the presence or absence of stamina in their constitutions. There is a something, we cannot exactly say what it is, perhaps the physician himself cannot put his finger upon it, but the one set of men without it are weak, and the others with it are full of force. Our Lord Jesus has come that, in a spiritual sense, we may have stamina, may have well-founded, well-furnished, well-established, confirmed, and vigorous life, so that we may be capable of arduous service and powerful action. He would have us walk without weariness, and run without fainting. He would have us quit ourselves like men, and be strong. Beloved, do you not see how great a difference there is between some Christian men and others? Are not some of them spiritual

invalids. They believe, but their favourite prayer is, "Lord, help our unbelief!" They hope, but fear is almost as fully in possession of their hearts. They have love to Christ, but they often sing—

"Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his or am I not?"

They want medicine and nursing. Give them any work to do for the Lord, and how soon they grow weary; discourage them a little, and they are in despair. Oh that the Spirit of God would give them life more abundantly! I am afraid that a very large proportion of Christian men in this day are on the sick list, and are in a decline, from want of deep-seated principle, and sound vitality of godliness, which is what I mean by stamina. It is sad to see how some professing Christians are led astray by any error which is plausibly put before them. If all Christians were alike, then Popery might easily become the universal religion of the country, for they have no Protestant principle, no grounding in doctrine, no firmness in the faith. They believe, but they know not why or wherefore, and cannot give a reason for the hope which is in them. It is to be feared that they profess the truth because others go that way, and some eloquent preacher has won their affection, and become their oracle. They have not the stuff in them of which martyrs are made, they have no grit in their nature, no decision, no tenacity of belief, no firmness of grip; consequently, whenever persecuting times come over this land, they will be our weakness. We shall have to look after such puny camp followers, and put them in the rear, or the enemy will make sad havoc among them. Those who have life more abundantly are good soldiers of Jesus Christ, they have learned to stand fast in the truth, and by the blessing of God they are more than a match for the teachers of error, for they know what they know, and are able to put to silence the fair speeches of deceivers; they are not carried away with every wind of doctrine, but abide in the truth as they have been taught. They cry, "O God, my heart is fixed!" They are "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." I pray that every member of this church may be a man of inward stamina, not one of those spiritual babies whom we have to be looking after every day, and feeding with spiritual spoon victuals every Sabbath, but men who, by the blessing of God, have got something in them which they know the value of, and which they could not give up if all the world should tempt or threaten them. I compared such strong believers to navigators, and I shall not withdraw the comparison, for we want men who can say to the mountains, "Be ye removed," and to the valleys, "Be ye exalted"; and it is by such agents that the Lord will make straight in the wilderness a highway for his march of mercy.

In a second sense we have life more abundantly by *the enlargement of the sphere of our life*. To some forms of human life the range is very narrow. Wordsworth's ploughman had no great abundance of life, for

"The primrose by the river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And nothing more."

To plough and sow, and reap and mow, were his philosophy. The seasons preached no sacred homilies to him; the birds sang, but he

would have been as much pleased if they had been silent; the hills were a weariness to climb, and the view from their summit he thought nothing of. His soul was inside his smock frock and his corduroys, and never wished to go beyond them. Nor in the fields alone are there such beings; our streets swarm with men in broadcloth of the same race, to whom "the music of the spheres" means the chink of sovereigns, and whose choice quotations relate to the price of stocks, and changes of the market. Over the Exchange we read, "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof," but they read it, "This earth is our God, and the fulness thereof is our all." The souls of such men live like squirrels in cages, and each day their wheel revolves; it is all the world they know. Jesus Christ has come to give his people a wider, broader life than this. True, there are many men upon whom Christ has never looked, whose life traverses wider areas than those which content the baser sort. Such men map out the stars, and fathom the sea; they read the mysterious story of the rocks, and con the ages past; they are deep in philosophy, and force their way into the secret chambers, where the callow principles of things are nestling; they have a life which is bounded only by time and space. But, beloved, when Jesus comes, he enlarges the sphere of the most capacious mind, and makes the greatest intellect to feel that it was but "cabin'd, cribb'd, confined," until he set it free. Beyond time and space does Jesus lead us. The life which he has given us has been tossed upon the stormy sea of sin, and has descended into the deeps of the tremendous ocean of terror. We have been like Jonah at the bottom of the mountains, where the earth with her bars seemed about us for ever. The grace of our pardoning God has now set us on a rock, and given us to behold the paradise of pardon. What a blessed thing it is to be forgiven, to be dear to the Father's heart, and to feel the Father's kiss! This is a new world to us—to live as they live who live at home with God, and see his smile, and feast upon his love! This is a life of no mean dimensions, for we dwell in God, and are in fellowship with the Infinite. We are no longer shut up to self, but we hold converse with the spirits before the throne, and commune with all the saints redeemed by blood. Now we have seen those mysteries which were aforetime hidden from our eyes; the path which the eagle's eye hath not seen we have gazed upon, and the way which the lion's whelp hath not trodden we have traversed. We have entered into the mysteries of the invisible, and have stood within the veil. We were as little birds within their shells, but the Lord has broken our prison, and his Spirit has led us into all truth, and shown us that which was hid from ages and from generations. In this sense we have life more abundantly.

Thirdly, our life in Christ becomes more abundant as *our powers are brought into exercise*. I suppose all the powers of the man are in the child, but many of them are dormant, and will only be exercised when life is more abundant. None of us know what we may be, we are but in our infancy yet. Christ has come to give us a fuller life than we have yet attained. Look at the apostles! Before Pentecost they were mere junior scholars, only fit to occupy the lower forms; they were often ambitious, and contentious among themselves; but

when Jesus had given them the Spirit, what different men they were ! Would you believe that the Peter of the gospels could be the same person as the Peter of the Acts ? Yet he was the selfsame man ; Pentecost had developed in him new powers. When I hear him saying, "I know not the man," and a few weeks after see him standing up in the midst of the Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, and boldly preaching Christ, I ask, What has happened to this man ? and the reply is, Christ has given him life more abundantly, and he has developed in himself powers which were concealed before. Beloved, you pray ; yes, but if God gives you more life, you will pray as prevalently as Elias. Even now you seek after holiness ; but if you have life more abundantly, you will walk before the Lord in glorious uprightness as Abraham did. I know that you praise the Lord ; but if the more abundant life fills you, you will rival the angels in their songs. I repeat what I have already said to you—we do not know what we may become. Fain would I fire you with a holy ambition. Pray to Jesus to make you all you can be. Say to him, "Lord, nurture in me all the graces, powers, and faculties by which I can glorify thee. To the fulness of my manhood use me. Send a full stream of life upon me that all my soul may wake up, and all that is within me may magnify thee. Get all out of me that can possibly come out of such a poor thing as I am. Let thy Spirit work in me to the praise of the glory of thy grace." I desire, brethren, for myself and you, that we may be alive all over, for some professors appear to be more dead than alive ; life has only reached a fraction of their manhood. Life is in their hearts, blessed be God for that ; but is only partially in their heads, for they do not study the gospel nor use their brains to understand its truths. Life has not touched their silent tongues, nor their idle hands, nor their frost-bitten pockets. Their house is on fire, but it is only at one corner, and the devil is doing his best to put out the flame. They remind me of a picture I once saw, in which the artist had laboured to depict Ezekiel's vision, and the dead bodies in course of resurrection. The bones were coming together, and flesh gradually clothing them, and he represents one body in which the head is perfectly formed, but the body is a skeleton, while in another place the body is well covered, but the arms and legs remain bare bones. Some Christians, I say, are much in the same state : they are alive only in parts, and in some it must be some very hidden part which is quickened, for little or nothing is to be seen of practical love or zeal. Oh for men who are alive from head to feet, whose entire existence is full of consecration to Jesus and zeal for the divine glory ; these have life "more abundantly."

Fourthly, *an increased degree of energy* is intended in the text. We may have the powers, but may not exercise them, and no doubt many men have great spiritual capacities, but they lie still for lack of *activity of purpose*. Now, when is a man most alive ? Some are so alive when they are in determined pursuit of a favourite purpose. They have formed a resolution, and they mean to carry it out, and you can see their whole man pressing forward upon the track, all aroused and full of eagerness. Now, the Lord Jesus has furnished us

with a purpose which is sure to stimulate us to energetic life, for "the love of Christ constraineth us." He has given us a motive and an impulse which we cannot resist, and we are in covenant with him that we will glorify his name so long as we have any being. We are solemnly resolved, and earnestly set to seek his honour. This gives an intensity to life which increases its abundance by arousing it all. A man is said to be full of life when he is worked up into excitement and fired with passion. Enthusiasm is life effervescing, life in volcanic eruption. Where there is determined resolve, if you arouse the man by opposition, you will see his whole life come into action. He was quiet enough before, but you have roused the lion in him. His life was slumbering at ebb, now it is dashing up at flood. The man is carried right away; in look and speech he is all alive, and in acting he is energetic to the last degree. Our divine Master has aroused the flame of our life by inspiring us with the glorious passion of love to himself. This provides us with stimulus and impetus. A heart which is wholly surrendered to the love of Jesus is capable of thoughts and deeds to which colder souls must for ever be strangers. Energetic, forceful, triumphant life belongs to souls enamoured with the cross, and espoused in ardent love to the heavenly Bridegroom.

Abundance of a kind of life is painfully manifest in insane persons. The demoniac in the Scripture burst the chains with which he was bound, for he had unusual strength when the paroxysm of his rage was on him. Now if possession by an evil spirit arouses men to an unusual force of life, how much more shall possession by the divine Spirit gird a man with extraordinary energy! It is not possible for us to tell how potent for good any man among us may become. As the man who was feeble enough before, when he became possessed with an evil spirit refused to be held in bondage, so the man possessed by the divine Spirit becomes supernaturally strong, and refuses to be the captive of sin or Satan. Look at Martin Luther; could you have believed that such a poor monk would shake the Vatican? and yet in his zeal for truth and hatred of error he did it. Look you at other men in other times, who have been raised up of God for a special purpose; what abundant life their holy ardour gave them! They were like Samson of old. Go up to Samson, feel his flesh, look at his bones; he is no larger than another man; though his thews indicate enormous strength, yet he does not seem so surprisingly superior to others. Wait you till the Spirit of God moves him in the camp of Dan, and then woe to the thousands of the Philistines. See how he piles them heaps upon heaps, while hip and thigh he smites them! See how he takes the pillars of their temple and rocks them to and fro, and brings the edifice down upon their heads! The Spirit of God is on the man, and he works wondrously. If the Spirit of God shall come upon you, it will make you do greater things than these, and achieve loftier victories. Only believe it, and come to Christ, for abundant life is yet to be had.

We will change the line of our thought, and coming to the fifth point, we will say that abundance of life is often seen in *the overflow of enjoyment*. On a spring morning, when you walk in the field, and see the lambs frisking so merrily, you have said, "There is life for you."

You see a company of little children, all in excellent health, how they amuse themselves, and what pranks they play! You say, "What life there is in those children!" Catch one of the little urchins, and see if he does not wriggle out of your arms, and you say, "Why, he is all life." Just so, and hence his mirth. In youth there is much life and overflow of spirits. When Israel came out of Egypt, she was young Israel, and how merrily did she smite her timbrels and dance before Jehovah. When churches are revived, what life there is in them, and then what singing! Never comes a revival of religion without a revival of singing. As soon as Luther's Reformation comes, the Psalms are translated and sung in all languages; and when Whitfield and Wesley are preaching, then Charles Wesley and Toplady must be making hymns for the people to sing, for they must show their joy, a joy born of life. When the Lord gives you, dear friend, more life, you also will have more joy. You will no more go moping about the house, or be thought melancholy and dull when the Lord gives you life more abundantly. I should not wonder but what you will get into the habit of singing at your work, and humming over tunes in your walks. I should not wonder if persons ask, "What makes So-and-so so happy? what makes his eyes twinkle as with some strange delight? He is poor, he is sick, but how blissful he appears to be!" This will be seen, brother, when you not only have life, but when you have it more abundantly.

Now, sixthly, this is a somewhat peculiar fact, but I think it should not be omitted. The abundance of life will be seen in *delicacy of feeling*. No doubt there is a very great deal of difference as to the amount of pain which persons suffer under the same operation. There are persons so constituted that you might cut off an arm and they would scarcely feel more than another person would suffer during the drawing of a tooth; there are some, on the other hand, to whom the slightest pain involves a thrill of horror, they are so sensitive. Whether it is an advantage or a disadvantage I cannot tell, but it has certainly been observed by skilful physicians that those persons who have strong mental constitutions, who use their brains much, and have a fine mental organisation, are usually those who suffer most when subject to pain; there is more life in them of a certain sort, and they are more sensitive for that reason. Now, when the Lord Jesus Christ gives his people life in its higher forms, they become more capable of pain. The same sin will pain them a hundred times more than it used to do, and they will shrink from it with greater anxiety to avoid it. If you are only just a Christian, you may do wrong, and you will be penitent; but if you have much life and you do wrong, ah, then your heart will be wrung with anguish, and you will loathe yourself before God. The man full of delicate life will not only suffer more, but he has probably more pleasure; he is sensitive to joys unknown to others, and his whole constitution thrills with a pleasure which another but faintly perceives. The name of Jesus is inexpressibly sweet to those who have abundant life. It is precious if you only have life, but it is beyond all price to those who have very tender hearts, which swell with exuberant life. I have met with some Christians who say they cannot understand Solomon's Song, and I have not wondered at it, for that is a test book for sensitive souls, and when

men have much of the life of love, that sacred canticle suits their feelings better than any other book in the Bible, because it is a tender book of sacred love, and glows like altar coals. Oh, I pray you, have much of the tenderness of the intense life.

Nor is this all I mean by delicacy. I mean this. There is a delicacy of hand which a man may acquire by long practice, which renders that wonderful member a great worker of feats. The fingers and palm are all life, and can execute manipulations of a most surprising kind. Even so the hand of educated faith can not only grasp but handle the good word of life. When gifted with this faculty, we pry into the mysteries of the heart of Jesus as others cannot. The lips also can become sensitive. Laura Bridgman learned to read with her lips the raised letters, and blind persons very generally have a wonderful life in the ends of their fingers which others of us have not yet developed. So the Lord would have his people enjoy a sensitively discerning life, which shall reveal to them what else they would never have felt and known. Oh, when your soul is blest with holy delicacy, when every part of your nature has become full and brimming over with intense sensitiveness, and, withal, an educated sensitiveness to the divine mind and will, then are you getting where Christ would have you to be.

Once more this delicacy shows itself in a marvellous apprehensiveness and keenness of perception which had not been there before. The Indian will put his ear to the ground, and say, "There is an enemy on the way," while you cannot hear a sound. When he comes to a turn in the forest, "There is the trail," says he, "to the right," though you cannot see that a stick has been moved, or that a single blade of grass has been bent. His faculties are full of life, and therefore he has a better ear and a better eye than you. Remember the story of the Siege of Lucknow. When the Highland woman said, "Dinna ye hear it?—dinna ye hear it?" she could hear the sound of the Highland music, when it was far away. I do not doubt she heard it, though others did not; her ear was quicker than theirs. Jesus would have us quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord, so that we shall say, "He is coming—he is coming! I can hear his footfall!" And the world will say, "You are mad; let us eat, and drink, and be married and given in marriage." We want to be able to say, "I can hear the Bridegroom's voice," when others will say, "Not so, it is mere imagination." We want eyes which will see the land which is very far off, so that the golden gates of our heavenly home shall be visible to us. Thus shall we have life "more abundantly."

The seventh point is this—life, when it is in abundance, becomes *supreme*. Some races of men have physical life, but have it not abundantly; for instance, the Red Indian and the Australian races have life, but after awhile they perish and die from off the face of the earth, while other races of more vigorous life battle with their surroundings and survive. Christians should have such abundant life that their circumstances should not be able to overcome them; such abundant life that in poverty they are rich, in sickness they are in spiritual health, in contempt they are full of triumph, and in death full of glory. Glorious is that life which defies circumstances. Christ has given to us, brethren, a supreme life, supreme in its tenacity; it cannot be

destroyed, none can cut its thread. "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" Neither things present, nor things to come, shall ever avail to do this; we have life so abundantly that it triumphs over all. What I desire beyond everything is to have this life so abundant that it may be supreme over my entire self. There is death within us, and that death struggles with our life. Our life has dashed death down, and holds it beneath its feet; but tremendous is the struggle of death to rise again and get the mastery. Brethren, we must hold death down, we must grip him as with bands of iron, and hold him down, and plant the knee of prayer upon his bosom, and press him to the earth. We must not suffer sin to have dominion over us, but life more abundant must, through grace, triumph over inward corruption.

There is yet much beyond you, Christian brethren, but that much is attainable. You are not to sit down and say, "We must be always captives to the flesh, to yield it obedience." Beloved, ye may overcome; God's grace being in you, ye may overcome. Ye shall not this side the grave congratulate yourselves upon perfection, such boasting be far from you; but in the strength of God, the life of God which is in you may be increased, and shall be increased, for Christ has come to increase it, till death shall be trodden down, and you shall be more than conquerors through him that has loved you.

My time has gone, the subject is too large for me, only this I conclude with—if you want life you must have it from Christ, if you want more life you must go to the same place. Do not look to Christ for the beginnings and then somewhere else for the endings. Christ has come that you might have more life. Come to him by faith. Do not look to ceremonies or outward services or anything else for growth in grace, apart from Jesus, but fly to him and he will give it you, and you shall be rich to all intents of bliss. God grant that all the members of this church may have this great blessing for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN I.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—46 (Version II.) 798, 818.

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A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."—Isaiah xliv. 3—6.

In the Christian church at this moment there is a very general desire for a revival of religion. You may go where you may among Christian people, and you will find that they are mourning over the present state of things, and saying the one to the other, "When will a greater blessing come? How can we obtain it? When shall we make some impression upon the masses of the ungodly? When shall our houses of prayer be filled with attentive hearers? When will the Lord's kingdom come, and his right arm be made bare in the eyes of all the people?" I am delighted to hear the inquiry; my soul magnifies the Lord as I discern tokens of growing anxiety about the cause and kingdom of Jesus and the perishing sons of men. This is an omen of better times. "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." Searchings of heart, anguish, groanings which cannot be uttered, and abounding intercession, are the heralds of blessing; they are that sound in the tops of the mulberry trees which calls upon believers to bestir themselves in hope of victory. May the movement among the saints continue and deepen, till it brings forth a movement among sinners far and wide.

At this time, also, there are manifest the most pleasing signs that God is about to work among his people. A very notable ingathering of converts has taken place in the town of Newcastle, and the two brethren whom God honoured to be the means of it have now removed

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to the city of Edinburgh. There the ministers of all denominations are united in helping them, and in earnestly imploring the divine blessing; the gracious visitation which has already come upon Edinburgh is such as was probably never known before within the memory of man. The whole place seems to be moved from end to end. When we hear of many thousands coming together on week-days, to quite ordinary meetings, and crying, "What must we do to be saved?" there is, we are persuaded, the hand of God in the matter. Now, there is among earnest Christians a general feeling that what has been done for Edinburgh is greatly needed for London, and must be done for London, if prayer and earnest effort can obtain it. Our prayers must go up incessantly that God will be pleased to send forth his saving health among the people of this great city of four million souls, and turn many to righteousness, to the praise of the glory of his grace. Our growing anxiety for Christ's glory, and our faith in the energy of his Spirit will be two hopeful signs of a coming blessing.

As a church we have always felt a delight in any work which has to be done for God of this kind, and we have enjoyed for many years a continuous visitation of grace. That which would be a revival anywhere else has been our ordinary condition, for which we are thankful. By the space of these twenty years, almost without rise or fall, God has continued to increase our numbers with souls saved by the preaching of his truth. Unto him be all the praise! But now we are anxious to take a part in a yet further advance; we want a greater blessing. What we have had has not decreased, but rather stimulated our appetite. Oh, for more conversions! more hearts for Jesus! Would God that the dews of heaven would fall in sevenfold abundance upon us, and our fellow Christians, and the past be put to the blush by the future! That this desire may be fanned to a flame in all our hearts is my earnest prayer. I have taken this text as one which is full of encouragement, that we may be all moved with hope and excited with expectation.

I shall handle it in this way. First, we have before us *the great covenant blessing of the church*; secondly, we have *the glorious result of that blessing described*; and when we have spoken thus, we shall spend the rest of our time in speaking of *the conduct which is consistent with the desire that this blessing, and its results, may come to us*.

I. In our text we have THE GREAT COVENANT BLESSING OF THE CHURCH. It is the gift of the Holy Ghost. Whatever metaphor is used, this is the meaning of it. He is the refreshing, life-giving, fertilising water, the living water of which Jesus spake. The first promise of the text, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground," is explained by the second, "I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."

While speaking upon this, it is well for us to remember, first, that *this blessing has been already given*. We must never underrate the importance of the ascension of our Lord, and the gift of the Spirit which followed thereupon. God forbid that we should think lightly of Pentecost: the Holy Ghost then descended, and we have no record that the Spirit has since ascended and departed from the church. He

is the church's perpetual heritage, and abideth with us for ever. I like to sing—

“The Holy Ghost is here,
Where saints in prayer agree,
As Jesu's parting gift he's near
Each pleading company.

“Not far away is he,
To be by prayer brought nigh,
But here in present majesty,
As in his courts on high.”

He is permanently resident in the midst of the church. But when we have received that truth, we may still go on to use the language which is very frequent among us, and pray for the outpouring of the Spirit. If the language be not exactly accurate, the meaning is most excellent. So far as any one assembly or person is concerned, we may request the Holy Spirit to be poured forth upon us in his gracious operations; we desire to see the Spirit of God working more mightily in the church; we long each one of us to be more completely subject to his influences, and more filled with his power, so that we may be full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. We want to see the Holy Spirit poured upon those who have it not; upon the dead in sin that they may be quickened, upon the desponding that they may be consoled, upon the ignorant that they may be illuminated, and upon seekers that they may find him who alone is our peace. We, being evil, give good gifts unto our children, and therefore we are persuaded that our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. We do but enlarge upon the prayer of the apostolic benediction when we cry for the blessing peculiar to the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that quickeneth; neither the letter of the word nor the energy of our manner can give life; therefore we feel that when we have prophesied to the dry bones we must also prophesy to the wind; for unless the breath divine shall come, the dry bones will never live.

Notice, beloved, that this great covenant blessing of the Spirit is in our text *the subject of a promise*. “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.” We may always be confident of receiving those blessings which are promised by the Lord. The general promise, “No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly,” is very comforting, and under its broad cover we are encouraged to plead for many favours for which we have no special note of promise; but when we can put our finger upon a plain and specific word, by which a certain good thing is guaranteed to us, our faith rises to full assurance, and we feel confident of receiving an answer to our prayer. “Thou hast said, ‘I will pour my spirit upon thy seed,’ therefore, O Lord, fulfil this word unto thy servant, in which thou hast caused him to hope.” You have God's word for it; place your finger upon it, and on your knees beseech the Lord to do as he has said. He cannot lie, he never will revoke his word. Has he said, and shall he not do it?

“As well might he his being quit,
As break his promise or forget.”

He has spontaneously made the promise, and he will divinely make it good. Upon every promise the blood of Jesus Christ has set its seal, making it "yea and amen" for ever. Prove him, then, herewith, and you shall find him faithfulness itself. A promise of God is the essence of truth, the soul of certainty, the voice of faithfulness, and the substance of blessing.

What a right royal promise it is ! How lofty and full of assurance is the language ! "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty." It is for God to say, "I will" and "I will." We may venture as far as declaring, "I will if I can ;" but there are no limits to his power. Our wisdom is to say, "I hope I shall be able to do as I desire ;" but there are no impossibilities with the Almighty. His Spirit falls upon men as a dew from the Lord, waiting not for man, neither tarrying for the sons of men. When the time has come for a shower, God asks not the potentates of earth to give their consent, but down come the blessed drops. When the season for spring has arrived, the Lord does not ask man to help him to remove the ice from the streams, or the snow from the hills, or the damps from the air. He asks no human aid in quickening the seeds, and arousing the plants, so that the sleeping flowers may open their lovely eyes and smile on all around. He does it all. His mystic influences, as omnipotent as they are secret, come forth, and the work is done. And so, glory be to God, we have a promise here which is the word of omnipotence, and when we plead it we need not be at all dismayed by the question, "Can such a thing be?" We know that dry bones can live when the Spirit breathes upon them, and we are equally well persuaded that the life-giving Spirit can so breathe, for we have a divine promise that he shall be given to the people. We hear the double "I will, I will," and we are certain that the Lord can and will "pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground."

It becomes us also, brethren, to notice that this gift, which is the subject of a promise, is *a most needful blessing*. I have sometimes heard it sneeringly remarked that we know very well we want the Holy Spirit, and there is no need to be everlastingly talking about it. But, brethren, we need to make frequent acknowledgment of this truth; it is due to the Holy Spirit himself that we should do so. If we do not honour the Holy Spirit, we cannot expect him to work with us; he will be grieved, and leave us to find out our helplessness. Moreover, I fear that, however generally the doctrine of the necessity of the Spirit's work may be believed as a matter of theory, it is not acted upon; and what is not believed in practice is in fact not believed at all. I am very suspicious of a man who tires of a truth so vitally important, and dares to call it a platitude. We shall not hesitate to repeat the doctrine again and again, and we feel persuaded that God's people will not tire of it. Without the Spirit of God we can do nothing; we are as ships without wind, or chariots without steeds; like branches without sap, we are withered; like coals without fire, we are useless; as an offering without the sacrificial flame, we are unaccepted. I desire both to feel and to confess this fact whenever I attempt to preach. I do not wish to get away from it, or to conceal it, nor can I, for I am often made to feel it to the deep humbling of my spirit.

I pray that you who teach in the Sunday-school, you who visit the poor, you who work in any way for God, may own your impotence for good, and look for power from on high. To our hand the Holy Ghost is the force, to our eye he is the light. We are but the stones and he the sling, we are the arrows and he the bow. Confess your weakness, and you will be fit to be strengthened; own your emptiness, and it will be a preparation for receiving the divine fulness. For, observe, the promise of the living water is to "him that is thirsty," or, as it may be better rendered, and the figure would be more clear, "I will pour water upon it (the land) that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." The blessing is to come where it is needed, upon the desert, the parched places which are as the valley of death till the rain comes. If you think yourself to be as the well-watered plain of Sodom, God will pour no floods upon you; it is upon the thirsty land, upon the heart which laments its barrenness, and confesses its own unworthiness, that the Spirit of God shall come. I do pray that as a church we may never imbibe the idea that we have an entail of God's blessing, or a monopoly of his benediction; so that he is sure to append his approval to any one particular ministry, or any form of church government. The Lord might leave us, and will unless we lie low before him and own our nothingness. Remember his word, which he spake to his erring people when they boasted of their pedigree and called themselves his temple: "Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel." He may leave his garden to be overgrown with briars, and his vineyard to be marred with stones. God is not tied to any one place or people, he can remove the candlestick and set it up in another chamber; let the seven churches of Asia Minor serve as a warning to us in this thing. Thou blessed Spirit of the living God, we do confess the barrenness of our soil, and the drought of our land, and we beseech thee never to withdraw thy dew, or cause thy rain to depart from us! What greater curse couldst thou inflict than to let us alone? Oh, come upon us, we beseech thee, and let the divine promise be fulfilled!

It should be very comfortable to us to reflect that, while we need the Spirit of God, *his working is most effectual* to supply all our needs when he does come upon us. In the east, you can generally tell where there is a stream or a river by the line of emerald which marks it. If you stood on a hill, you could see certain lines of green, made up of grass, reeds, rushes, and occasional trees, which have sprung up along the water-courses. Nothing is required to make the land fertile but to water it. We are told by travellers that they have seen plains looking completely barren, apparently covered with dry dust and powder; yet a heavy shower has fallen, and in a space of time which seems incredible in our colder climate, the most lovely flowers and the most refreshing verdure have clothed the plains, till the wilderness and the solitary places have been glad, and the desert has rejoiced and blossomed as the rose; yea, it has blossomed exceedingly, and an excellency as of Carmel and Sharon has been upon it. Even thus let the Spirit of God come upon any church, and it is all that it needs to make it living and fruitful. Church machinery, apart from the Spirit of God, lacks the motive power; the motive power coming, your machinery will do its work.

Of course, if it is an imperfect machinery, the Holy Ghost will not make it do all the work which a better organisation would have done; still, even the most imperfect shall accomplish so much as to astonish all who behold it. What a blessing it is when the church does really receive the Spirit of God abundantly! Her ministry may be slow in utterance; like Moses, the leader of the people may be a man of stammering speech; or, like Paul, his personal appearance may be mean, and his speech contemptible; but this matters nothing when the Spirit of God is upon the man and in the people. The church may be very small, and the members may be very poor, and many of them illiterate, too; but as the barley cake of the soldier's dream smote the royal pavilion of Midian, so that it lay along, so the Lord, by the hand of the feeblest, shall do his greatest deeds, and get to himself renown. Where the Spirit of God is, there is the majesty of omnipotence.

I here call your attention to the fact that the promise in our text is *liberal and unstinted*. "I will *pour* water upon the thirsty land, and *floods* upon the dry ground." The Lord does not need to stint his gifts. When he gives a blessing he gives it like a king. His treasury will not be exhausted by giving, or replenished by withholding. I have seen in Italy the fields watered by the processes of irrigation: there are trenches made to run along the garden, and smaller gutters to carry the lesser streams to each bed, so that each plant gets its share of water; but the husbandman has to be very careful, for he has but little water in his tank, and only an allotted share of the public reservoir. No plant must have too much; no plot of ground must be drenched. How different is this from the methods of the Lord! He pours the water; he deluges the land. "The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes." Oh that he would pull up the sluices now, and let a torrent of grace rush through this Tabernacle. Oh that at this moment he would open the windows of heaven, and send us a flood of grace, like the deluge of vengeance in Noah's day, till the tops of our loftiest expectations should be covered. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask, or even think. He giveth liberally, and upbraideth not. Our abounding sin and death need abounding life and power. In such a city as this the largest blessing will be none too great. Let us open our mouths wide, that he may fill them. The Lord is illimitable in his wealth of grace, and boundless in his goodness and power. Let us take the promise as it stands, and plead it at the throne, "Hast thou not said, 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground'?" Lord, do it, to the praise of the glory of thy grace.

One other remark, and I leave this point. This covenant blessing is, in our text, *peculiarly promised to a certain class of persons who are especially dear to us*. "I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." Parents, lay hold greedily upon these points of the promise. I am afraid we do not think enough of the promise which the Lord has made to our children. Grace does not run in the blood; we have never fallen into the gross error of birth-right membership, or the supposition that the child of godly parents

has a right to Christian ordinances. We know that religion is a personal matter, and is not of blood nor of birth; we know also that all children are heirs of wrath till the grace of God regenerates them; but still there is some meaning in that gracious saying, "The promise is unto you and your children, even to as many as the Lord your God shall call." Paul was assuredly not wrong, but sweetly right, when he said to the jailer, in answer to his question, "What must I do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Lay hold of those words, Christian parents, and do not be content to get half the promise. Pray to God to fulfil it all. Go to him this very day, you mothers and fathers, and implore him to have pity upon your offspring. Cry unto him, and say, "Thou hast said, 'I will pour my spirit on thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring:' do it, Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake."

II. We are now to consider THE GLORIOUS RESULT OF THIS COVENANT BLESSING. The certain result of the outpouring of the Spirit is the upspringing of spiritual life. Wherever the water comes in Palestine, as I said before, the grass will be sure to follow it, and vegetation becomes lively at once. Wherever the Spirit of God comes, there will be life in the church and life in the ministry, life in prayer, life in effort, life in holiness, life in brotherly love.

The next effect will be seen in the calling out of numerous converts by the Holy Spirit. "They shall spring up as among the grass, and as willows by the water courses." Who can count the blades of grass? They are a fine symbol of the greatness of number, and might as justly be used for that purpose as the sands of the seashore. Where the Spirit of the Lord comes, converts are not few as the cedars of Lebanon, but they flourish like the grass of the earth. They fly as a cloud, and as doves to their dovecots. Can we be satisfied with having in a year a dozen or so added to the church? Yet do I meet with some of my brethren—and far be it from me to judge them—who say they have had a happy year, and are very comfortable though they have had only three or four persons added to the church. Surely, however small the congregation, that must be a very unsatisfactory reward for a twelvemonth's ministry. My brethren, where at this day do we see results attending the gospel which should satisfy us? Hundreds may be added to the church in a year, as has been our common blessing, but what are hundreds? If four hundred were brought into our fellowship last year, what is that out of four millions? What are these saved ones among so many? The headway made by the church is next to nothing; it hardly keeps pace with the growth of the population. We want more of the Spirit of God, and if we had it, I have no doubt whatever the converts would at once be counted by thousands and tens of thousands; and there is no reason whatever why the church of God, which is now in a pitiful minority, should not become in many a district a triumphant majority, and the influences of the grace of God be felt far and near.

Observe that the text tells us that the converts called out by the Spirit of God are vigorous and lively. "They shall spring as the grass." Now the grass in the east springs up without any sowing, cultivating, or any other attention: it comes up of itself from the

fruitful soil. There is the water, and there is the grass. So where the Spirit of God is with a church there are sure to be conversions, it cannot be otherwise. True, we are bound to use all agencies that are fit and right for the promotion of the good end; but where the Spirit of God is we shall often be astonished to find that far beyond the usual result of agencies the life has extended. The willows also are mentioned, to indicate great vitality. How rapidly the willow grows! There is a proverb in Cambridgeshire that a willow will buy a horse, where an oak won't buy a saddle; because the willow grows so quickly and yields such frequent boughs to the cutter. You may cut it this year, and in a short time you may remove its pliant boughs again, for they will come anew. So truly saved ones will bear discouragement and trial, and still spring up. If you cut every bough from the willow tree it will be green again next spring, and if you even fell it down to the root it does not signify, at the scent of water it will bud. Do you not remember when you were children taking little twigs of willow to make hoops around your little garden? You thought them dead, and therefore used them as a little fence; but in a short time, to your astonishment, they were all sprouting out with green. The willow is full of life. Now, where the Spirit of God is, the newly converted are full of life. You may check them, but they will not be repressed. You orthodox people, who happen to have surly tempers, may go round with your pocket-knives and snip at their boughs cruelly, and say, "We do not want these young people; we do not want revivals," but they will grow in spite of you. Blessed be God, you elder brethren cannot turn the penitent prodigals out of doors. Should you even be so unkind to the newly grown willows as to cut them right down, they will spring up again, for if they are plants of the Lord's own right hand planting, and of the Spirit's watering, they will outlive the worst of usage; they will grow as the grass and as willows by the water courses. We may expect then, if the Spirit of God shall work among us, that there will be an abundance of converts, and those of the most vigorous kind.

These conversions will come from all quarters. The text says, one shall say, and another shall call, and another shall subscribe. Here is one who is the son of a deacon—we expected him to give his heart to Jesus. There is another, he is not the child of a religious professor, but comes right out from an ungodly family. Ah, here is another, he had grown up and come to ripe years, having followed after folly, and confirmed himself in sin, yet he comes forward, for the grace of God has called him. One comes from the wealthy, another comes from the poor, a third comes from nobody knows where; but they will and must come, for God knows his own, and will call them. They shall come from all trades and occupations, from all churches and denominations; from these little boys below me, I hope, and from yon grey-headed people over yonder—one here, another there. We shall be wonder-struck as we hear from all corners, and parts, and places, "I am the Lord's;" and again, "I am called by the name of Jacob;" and again, "I am surnamed this day by the name of Israel." The work of divine grace does not run in a groove, but breaks out where it seems least likely to do so. At one time it creates a revival at Samaria, at

another time it saves a widow at Joppa, or the eunuch on the road to Gaza. Lord call whomsoever thou wilt, but do call many, for Jesus' sake.

One memorable thing about the conversions wrought by the Holy Ghost is this, that these converted people shall be led to avow their faith. They shall not, like Nicodemus, come to Jesus by night; they shall not hope to go to heaven creeping all the way behind the hedge; but they shall avow their allegiance. "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." The God of Israel shall be their God, and the people of Israel shall be their people. I love to see both these things in young converts. Some appear to dedicate themselves to God, but they feel themselves such superior beings that they do not join with any church, but hold themselves in the isolation which practically means, "Stand by, I am holier than thou." They do not think any church good enough for them, but my private opinion is that they are not good enough for any church. On the other hand, some will join a church, but do not seem to have had enough respect to the inward, vital part of religion in giving themselves up to the Lord, and therefore no church will find them to be any great gain. There must be the two together, a surrender to God and then a union with the people of God. Consider the first of these points:—One shall say, "I am the Lord's." He shall confess that from head to foot, body, soul and spirit, he is not his own but Christ's. He will feel, "I have been washed in his blood; I have been pardoned all my sins, and been renewed in heart; and now I am the Lord's, and I desire to live to his praise. Tell me what I can do, and how I can serve the Lord, for I am his, and mean to be his for ever." This is delightful. Oh, to hear hundreds of you saying this. I would give my life to see it.

Another convert is said to subscribe with his hand to the God of Jacob. He gives himself over to God, and he does it deliberately; as deliberately as a person who signs a deed by which he makes over an estate. He writes his name, and places his finger on the seal, and calmly says, "This is my act and deed." We do not recommend persons to write out covenants with God and sign them, they are apt to gender unto bondage; but we do recommend them to make such a covenant in their hearts before the Most High, saying,

"'Tis done, the great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's and he is mine:
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to obey the voice divine."

The text may have another rendering, for, if you notice, the word "*with*" in the text is in italics, to show that it was inserted by the translators. It might run thus: "Another shall subscribe his hand unto the Lord." This alludes to the custom which still exists, but which was more common in those days, of a servant being marked or tattooed in the hand with his master's name. So was it with soldiers; frequently when they were enthusiastic for a leader they would

print his name on some part of their body, and very often upon the palms of their hands. There are constant allusions to this in the classics. We know that devout worshippers dedicated themselves to the god they worshipped, and were stamped with a secret mark. Paul alludes to this when he says, "Henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus;" as much as to say "I am Christ's: I have had his name branded upon me." When he suffered from being scourged and beaten with rods, he called it bearing the marks of the Lord Jesus, and did as good as say, "Flog away, you will only engrave his name into my flesh, for I am Christ's." Now it would be a very superstitious and foolish thing for any man to be tattooed with the name of the Lord, or with a cross; but all that such an act meant in those who did it of old we ought to mean, namely, that we are for ever, and beyond recall, the property of Jesus. Our ear is bored. We are servants as long as we live to our dear Master. They may sooner kill us than lead us away from him whose we are, and whom we serve. Who shall separate us from the love of God?

"High heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

There was dedication to God of the fullest kind, but side by side with it went unity with the church, for the declaration, "I am the Lord's," was parallel with "calling himself by the name of Jacob." Now the name of Jacob was the first, the lower, the common name of God's people, they were the seed of Jacob. "Ah," says the man who is converted, "I do not care what they call Christian people, they may call me by the same title if they will, and I will not complain. They may call us Puritans, Methodists, Ranters, Quakers, or whatever they like, I am one of them." I have read of a certain nobleman who was also a saint, that when he heard religious persons scoffed at as Puritans, he was accustomed at once to declare, "I am a Puritan too. I glory in being one of them." They felt that it was of little use to mock at him, he was too stout a soldier and too bold a speaker. It is a grand thing when a man can say in company, "It does not matter what you think of religion, I belong to such and such Christian people, and I am not ashamed of it. I know their name is a mockery, and their minister is despised, but it does not matter, I am one of them." It is mentioned, also, that one surnamed himself by the name of Israel. That was the grand name of the church in those days—Israel, the prevailing prince. We ought to feel that to be a Christian is to possess a patent of nobility second to none. Duke, earl, knight, esquire—we covet none of these; call us by the name of Christ and we have honour enough. The name of Caesar is a poor thing compared with the name of Christ. Better be owned as a disciple of Jesus than as an emperor of emperors. Oh, may the Spirit of God be poured out upon this place, that many of you may be savingly converted, and then say, "I will give myself to the Lord, and will also cast in my lot with his people; where they dwell I will dwell; where they die there would I die; their people my people, since their God has become my God." Pray, dear

brethren, that the promise before us may be fulfilled in this church, and in all the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Now, lastly, I have to speak upon THE CONDUCT SUITABLE IF WE OBTAIN THIS BLESSING. First, O my brethren in Christ, if we would obtain these floods of blessing we must confess how dry, how thirsty, how wilderness-like we are. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the hand of God, and he will exalt you in due time. "He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away." Oh, for the spirit of humiliation throughout the church!

Next to that let us cultivate prayer. "For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." If you have a man's cheque for a thousand pounds, it would be very wicked of you to say, "I cannot get my money, this paper is not paid," if you have never taken it to the bank; and so, if you have God's promise, and have never pleaded it, it is your own fault if you have not obtained the blessing. The very least thing God can ask of us is that we shall ask of him. "Ask and it shall be given you: seek and ye shall find: knock and it shall be opened unto you." Plead more earnestly in private, make your prayer-meetings more energetic, attend them more numerous, throw your hearts more fully into them, and God's Spirit will be surely given.

Next to that, if we want the blessing we must put forth our own personal effort. It would be a most absurd thing for a man to pray for a harvest, and neither plough nor sow. I cannot conceive anything more insulting to the majesty of God than for us to pray, and meanwhile fold our arms. It is not thus that we prove our sincerity. I desire to preach to you as if the conversion of these sinners around us depended wholly upon me, and then I delight to fall back upon the truth that it wholly depends upon the Lord God. Sunday-school teachers, use the means for the conversion of your children! Try and speak personally to every one of them; if you can find opportunity, pray with them one by one alone. You will win young hearts for Jesus in that way. Try, dear friends, to get hold of individuals. You who come here continually, look out for individuals in the congregation, and endeavour to tell them what you have experienced of the love of Christ. If you cannot speak to them, write letters to them; an earnest letter is as good as a sermon. Do anything, do everything, to bring souls to Jesus. While we are working we shall find God working with us, for he is never slower than his people. If we are building, he will be the Master Builder, and will build through us. For a man to pray that he may have a safe journey, and then to go to bed, and not start from home, would be wickedness; and to pray to God to convert sinners, and then not to preach or teach them the gospel, would be a piece of impudent mockery of God. Beloved, see to this. I cannot pause to stir you up about it, for our time is going; but I pray the Holy Ghost to stir you, that every one here may become a soul winner.

Once more, I have a word to say to those who are not the people of God. O beloved ones, who are not saved, all our concern is about your salvation. We are always preaching and praying about you. How can you obtain saving faith? I would urge you to labour after a clear

idea of your real position. O unconverted people, try to know where you are, and what you are. It might perhaps arouse you from your present indifference. If you would really and distinctly understand that you are out of Christ, condemned already, an enemy to God by wicked works, with the wrath of God abiding on you, and in danger of eternal perdition, it might startle you and lead you to desire salvation. I should think hopefully of you if I knew that you were taking stock, and estimating your condition before God. May I ask you when you get home to sit down and write, every one of you, on a piece of paper, "Saved," if you are saved, and "Condemned," if you are not a believer, for that is your condition? I want you to realise whose you are, and where you are going. When you have done so, I pray that a sense of your condition and prospects may be deepened upon your mind. Sinners, do you think enough? Do you consider enough? You are busy about a thousand things, but do you really think about your souls, death and judgment, and eternal perdition? Do you think enough about the Saviour's love? Do you ponder your sin, and the blessed fact that it may be pardoned? Oh, that you would reflect, consider, and turn your whole mind to God!

But I am beating the bush. I have a much more important precept to which to exhort you. Remember, the gospel command is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Every minute that you remain an unbeliever you are adding to your sin, you are increasing your iniquity and confirming yourself in condemnation. Oh, that you would believe the divine testimony concerning Jesus, for that is the object of faith! What you are asked to believe is true. He whom you are commanded to trust in is able to save you; and the promise that you shall be saved if you trust is a sure and certain one. Do not, therefore, fling away your souls, and despise the mercy of God. May it please the Eternal Spirit to lead you at this very moment to put your trust in Jesus Christ, and to be saved; then you will be one of those who spring as the grass, and as the willows by the water-courses. May God bless you, every one of you, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah xliv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—98, 95 (Song II.), 67.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A LESSON FROM THE LIFE OF KING ASA.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars."—2 Chronicles xvi. 9.

OUR text leads us to speak upon historical matters, and for this I shall by no means apologise, although I have sometimes heard very foolish professors speak slightingly of the historical part of Scripture. Remember that the historical books were almost the only Scripture possessed by the early saints; and from those they learned the mind of God. David sang the blessedness of the man who delighted in the law of the Lord, yet he had only the first five books, and, perhaps, Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, all books of history, in which to meditate day and night. The psalmist himself spoke most lovingly of these books, which were the only statutes and testimonies of the Lord to him, with, perhaps, the addition of the Book of Job. Other saints delighted in the histories of the word before the more spiritual books came in their way at all. If rightly viewed, the histories of the Old Testament are full of instruction. They supply us both with warnings and examples in the realm of practical morals; and hidden within their letter, like pearls in oyster shells, lie grand spiritual truths couched in allegory and metaphor. I may say of the least important of all the books what our Lord said of children, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." To take away from Holy Writ involves a curse upon the daring deed: may we never incur the penalty! All Scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable; be it ours to gain the profit. Let us see whether we cannot get a lesson from the life of King Asa.

We will commence by noticing *who he was, and what he had done in his better days*, for this will help to understand more clearly the fault into which he fell. He was a man of whom it is said that his heart was perfect before God all his days. It is a great thing to have said of any one; indeed, it is the greatest commendation which can be

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pronounced upon mortal man. When the heart, the intention, the master-affection is right, the man is reckoned a good man before the Lord, notwithstanding that there may be a thousand things which are not commendable—yea, and some things which are censurable in the man's outward career. Asa is noticeable in the early part of his life for the fact that he set up the worship of God, and carried it out with great diligence, though his mother was an idolater, and his father, Abijah, was little better. He had enjoyed no training as a youth that could lead him aright, but quite the contrary; yet he was very decided, even in the first days of his reign, for the Lord his God, and acted in all things with an earnest desire to glorify Jehovah, and to lead his people away from all idols to the worship of the true God. Now, a life may begin well, and yet may be clouded ere its close; the verdure of earnestness may fade into the sere and yellow leaf of backsliding. We may have the grace of God in our earliest days, but unless we have day by day fresh help from on high, dead flies may pollute the ointment and spoil the sweet odour of our lives. We shall need to watch against temptation so long as we are in this wilderness of sin. Only in heaven are we out of gunshot of the devil. Though we may have been kept in the ways of the Lord, as Asa was, for fifty or sixty years, yet if left by the Master for a single moment we shall bring discredit upon his holy name.

In the middle of his reign Asa was put to the test by a very serious trial. He was attacked by the Ethiopians, and they came against him in mighty swarms. What a host to be arrayed against poor little Judah—an army of a million footmen and three hundred thousand chariots! All the host that Asa could muster—and he did his best—was but small compared to this mighty band; and it appeared as if the whole land would be eaten up, for the people seemed sufficient to carry away Judea by handfuls. But Asa believed in God, and therefore when he had mustered his little band he committed the battle to the Lord his God. Read attentively that earnest believing prayer which he offered. "And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee." How grandly he threw all his burden upon God! He declared that he rested in the Most High, and believed that God could as well achieve the victory by a few and feeble folk as by a vast army; after this prayer he marched to the battle with holy confidence, and God gave him the victory. The power of Ethiopia was broken before him, and Judah's armies returned laden with the spoil. You would not have thought that a man who could perform that grand action would become, a little after, full of unbelief; but the greatest faith of yesterday will not give us confidence for to-day, unless the fresh springs which are in God shall overflow again. Even Abraham, who at one time staggered not at the promise through unbelief, yet did stagger some time afterwards about a far less difficult matter. The greatest of God's servants, if their Lord hides his face, may sink even below the least; all the strength of the strongest lies in him.

After Asa had thus by divine strength won a great victory, he did not, as some do, grow proud of it, but he set to work, in obedience to a prophetic warning, to purge his country by a thorough reformation; he did it, and did it well. He did not show any partiality towards the rich and great in his country who were guilty of the worship of false gods, for the queen-mother was a great fosterer of idolatry, and she had a grove of her own with a temple in it, in which was her own peculiar idol; but the king put her away from her eminent position, took her idol, and not merely broke it, but stamped upon it and burned it, with every sign of contempt, at the brook Kidron, into which ran the sewage of the temple, to let the people know that, whether in high places or amongst the poor, there should be nothing left to provoke the Lord throughout the land. This was well done. Oh that such a reformation might happen in this land, for the country is beginning to be covered with idols and mass-houses! Everywhere they are setting up the altars of their breathen deity, shrines to the queen of heaven, the crucifix and the saints, while the spiritual worship of God is put aside to make room for vain shows and spiritual masquerades. The God of the Reformation—how much is he forgotten now-a-days! Oh for a return of the days of Knox, and his covenanting brethren! Asa was for a root and branch reform, and he went through with it bravely. You would not have thought that a man so thorough—a man who, like Levi of old, knew not his own mother when it came to the matter of serving God, but made “through stitch” with it, as the old writers used to say—you would not have supposed that he would be the man who, when he came into another trial, would be running after an idolater and cringing before him and praying him to give him his help. Alas, the best of men are men at the best! God alone is unchangeable. He alone is good always, or indeed at all. “There is none good save one, that is God.” We are only good as he makes us good; and if his hand be withdrawn even for a moment, we start aside like a deceitful bow, or a broken bone which has been badly set. Alas, how soon are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war broken, if the Lord uphold not! Asa, who could do marvels, and who walked so well and thoroughly before his God, yet nevertheless came to do foolishly and bring upon himself lifelong chastisement.

I have thus brought before you his character, because it was most fitting to start with this; it was due to his memory, and due to ourselves; for we must remember that, whatever we shall have to say against him, he was assuredly a child of God. His heart was right; he was a sincere, genuine, gracious believer. If any object that he had grievous faults, and therefore could not be a child of God, I shall be obliged to answer that they must first of all produce a faultless child of God this side heaven before they will have sufficient ground for such an objection. I find that the holiest of men in Scripture had their imperfections, with the sole exception of our Master, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, in whom was no sin. His garments were whiter than any fuller could make them, but all his servants had their spots. He is light, and in him is no darkness at all, but we, with all the brightness his grace has given us, are poor dim lamps at best. I make no exception even of those who claim perfection, for I have no

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more faith in their perfection than in the Pope's infallibility. There is enough of the earthen vessel left about the best of the Lord's servants to show that they are earthen, and that the excellency of the heavenly treasure of divine grace which is put within them may be clearly seen to be of God and not of them.

Now, we shall turn to notice the **GRAVE ERROR INTO WHICH ASA FELL**—the foolishness for which the prophet rebuked him. He was threatened by Baasha, the king of the neighbouring territory of Israel; he was not directly assailed by war, but Baasha began to build a fortress which would command the passages between the two countries, and prevent the people of Israel from coming to settle in the land of Judah, or make their annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Now, one would naturally have expected, from Asa's former conduct, that he would either have thought very little of Baasha, or else that he would have taken the case before God, as he did before in the matter of the Ethiopians. But this was a smaller trouble altogether, and somehow, I fancy, it was because it was a smaller trouble Asa thought that he could manage it very well himself by the help of an arm of flesh. In the case of the invasion by countless hordes of Ethiopians, Asa must have felt that it was of no use calling in Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, or asking any of the nations to help him, for with all their help he would not have been equal to the tremendous struggle. Therefore he was driven to God. But this being a smaller trial, he does not seem to have been so thoroughly divorced from confidence in man; but he looked about him, and thought that Ben-hadad, the heathen king of Syria, might be led to attack the king of Israel, and so draw him away from building the new fort, divide his attention, cripple his resources, and give Judah a fine opportunity of attacking him. Believers frequently behave worse in little trials than in great ones. I have known some children of God who have borne with equanimity the loss of almost everything they had, who have been disturbed and distracted and led into all sorts of doubt and mistrust by troubles that were scarcely worth the mentioning. How is it that vessels which bear a hurricane may, nevertheless, be driven upon a sandbank when there is but a capful of wind—that ships which have navigated the broad ocean have yet foundered in a narrow stream? It only proves this, that it is not the severity of the trial, it is the having or not having of God's presence that is the main thing; for in the great trial with the Ethiopians God's grace gave Asa faith, but in the little trial about Baasha, king of Israel, Asa had no faith, and began to look about him for help from men.

Observe that Asa went off to Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, who was a worshipper of a false god, with whom he ought to have had no connection or alliance whatever; and, what was worse, he induced Ben-hadad to break his league with Baasha. Here was a child of God teaching the ungodly to be untrue—a man of God becoming an instructor for Satan, teaching a heathen to be false to his promise. This was policy. This is the kind of thing which the kings of the earth practise towards one another; they are always ready to break treaties, though bound by the most solemn pledges. They make but light of covenants. The great matter with ambassadors even now-a-days is

to see which can entangle the other, for, as a statesman once said, "An ambassador is a person who is sent abroad to lie for the good of his country." Oh, the tricks, plots, deceptions, equivocations, and intrigues of diplomacy! No chapter in human history shows up our fallen nature in more mournful colours. Asa, I have no doubt, thought that all was fair in war. He took the common rule, the common standard of mankind, and went upon that; whereas, as a child of God, he ought to have scorned anything that was dishonourable or untrue; and as to saying to a heathen king, "Break thy league with Baasha, and make a league with me"—why, if he had been in a right state of heart, he would sooner have lost his tongue than have uttered such disgraceful words. But, child of God as he was, when he once got off the plain simple way of believing in God, and taking his trouble to God, there was no telling what he would do. When you set the helm of your vessel towards the point to which you mean to steer, and steer right on, whatever comes in your way, then your course will be well enough if you have a motive power within independent of wind and tide; but when you take to tacking this way, then you will have in due time to tack the other way; and when policy makes you do this wrong thing, policy will lead you to do another wrong thing, and so on, to a most lamentable degree. When our walk is with the Lord, it is a safe, holy, honourable walk, but the way of the flesh is evil, and ends in shame. If you follow the way of the world, though always a crowded way, it will turn out before long to be a miserable, pettifogging, cringing, humiliating, wretched way, dishonourable to the true-born heir of heaven. Dust shall be the serpent's meat, and if we practise the crawling, twisting, slimy arts of the serpent, we shall have to eat the dust too. Should a child of God degrade himself in that fashion? If he acts as he should act, he acts like a nobleman, nay, like a prince of the blood imperial of heaven, for is he not a son of God, one of heaven's true aristocracy? But when he degenerates to acting as worldlings do, then, alas! he stains his garments in the mire. I charge you, my dear brethren and sisters, to look well to this. Perhaps I may be speaking as God's mouth to some of you who are now entering upon a testing time, a trouble in the family, a trial in business, or a difficulty in reference to a contemplated marriage, and you are asking, "What course shall I take?" You know what a man of the world would do, and it has been suggested to you that such a course is the right one for you to follow. My dear brother, remember you are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world; mind you act accordingly. If you are a worldly man, and do as worldly men do, why I must leave you, for them that are without God judgeth; but if you are a man of God, and an heir of heaven, I beseech you, do not follow custom, or do a wrong thing because others would do it, or do a little evil for the sake of a great good, but in your confidence possess your soul, and abide faithful to conscience and to the eternal law of rectitude. Let others do as they please, but as for you, set the Lord always before you, and let integrity and uprightness preserve you. Ask the Lord to help you. Is it not written that he will with the temptation make a way of escape? "Cast thy burden upon the Lord: he will sustain thee. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved." Do not put forth your hand

to iniquity. You may, in order to help yourself, do in five minutes what you cannot undo in fifty years; and you may bring upon yourself a lifelong series of trial by one single unbelieving action. Beware of staying yourself on Egypt and sending for help to Assyria, for these will distress you, but help you not. Cry, "Lord, increase our faith!" That is what you greatly need in the trying hour, lest you should, like Asa, first of all turn from confidence in God, and then, looking to an arm of flesh, should be tempted to use illegitimate means in order to induce the creature to let you rely upon it.

Asa, having advanced so far in the wrong path, did worse still, if worse could be; for he took of the gold and silver which belonged to the house of the Lord, in order to purchase therewith the alliance of the Syrian monarch. I will say nothing about what belonged to his own house. He might do as he liked with that so long as he did not spend it upon sin, but he took of the treasure that belonged to the house of the Lord, and gave it to Ben-hadad to bribe him to break his league with Baasha, and be in league with himself. Thus God was robbed that the unbelieving king might find help in an arm of flesh. And, "Will a man rob God?" Yet a Christian never doubts God, and looks to the creature, without robbing him. If you rob him of nothing else, you rob him of his honour. Shall a father find his child trusting a stranger rather than his own sire? Shall the husband see his wife putting confidence in his enemy? Will not that rob him of that which is far more precious than gold? Is it not a breach of that undivided affection, and that complete confidence, which ought to exist in the conjugal relationship? And shall I mistrust my heavenly Father, my almighty helper, and put confidence in a poor, broken reed? Shall I cast my burden upon a poor fellow-sinner, and forget to rest in my Saviour? Shall the Well-beloved of my soul be only trusted in fair weather? and shall I have such a sorry opinion of him that, when it comes to a little storm, I run to some one else and ask him to be my refuge? Beloved, let it not be so with us, or we shall surely grieve the Lord and bring ourselves into much perplexity. Have we not been guilty of this enough already? Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we bent upon grieving his Holy Spirit? Can we not take warning from Asa? Need we run upon this rock when we can see the wrecks of others all around? The Lord grant we may take heed, according to his word!

So this good man, by his want of faith, fell into many sins; for I am compelled to add that he had to bear the blame of the consequences of his conduct, for when Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, came up and attacked Israel, he did not content himself with a battle or two, but he fell to plundering the Israelites and murdering them by wholesale, so that great sorrows were brought upon the people of Israel. And who was to blame for these sorrows but the king of Judah, who had hired the Syrians for that very purpose? He who ought to have been a brother to the Israelites became their destroyer, and every time the cruel sword of the Syrians slew the women and children of Israel, the poor afflicted people had Asa to thank for it. The beginning of sin is like the letting out of waters; none can foresee what devastation the floods may cause. Brethren, we can never tell what may be the con-

sequences of one wrong action ; we may kindle a fire in the forest, merely to warm our own hands, but where the sparks may fly, and how many leagues the conflagration may spread, an angel cannot prophesy. Let us jealously keep away from every doubtful deed, lest we bring evil consequences upon others as well as ourselves. If we carry no matches, we shall cause no explosions. Oh, for a holy jealousy, a deep conscientiousness, and, above all, a solemn conscientiousness on the point of faith ! To rest in the Lord—that is our business ; to stay ourselves only upon him—that is our sole concern. “My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.” Unbelief is in itself idolatry ; unbelief leads us to look to the creature, which is folly ; and to look to the creature is, in effect, to worship the creature, to put it into God’s place, and so to grieve God, and set up a rival in the holy place.

I want you to listen yet a little while longer to this story of Asa. It came to pass that Asa’s hiring Ben-hadad turned out to be a fine thing for him, and, in the judgment of everybody who looked on, I dare say it was said that it was a fortunate stroke of business. According to God’s mind, the king’s course was evil, but it did not turn out badly for him politically. Now, many people in the world judge actions by their immediate results. If a Christian does a wrong thing, and it prospers, then at once they conclude he was justified in doing it ; but, ah ! brethren, this is a poor, blind way of judging the actions of men and the providence of God. Do you not know that there are devil’s providences as well as God’s providences ? I mean this. Jonah wanted to go to Tarshish to flee from God, and he went down to Joppa ; and what ? Why, he found a ship just going to Tarshish. What a providence ! What a providence ! Are you so foolish as to view it in that light ? I do not think Jonah was of that mind when he cried unto God out of the deeps. When the chief priests and Pharisees would take Jesus, they found Judas ready to betray him. Was this also a providence ? May not Satan have some hand in the arrangement which lays a weapon so near a murderer’s hand, or renders robbery and fraud so easy ? Do you think it an instance of divine goodness that the tares often grow plentifully when the wheat suffers from drought. Often have we observed people who wanted to do wrong, and things have just happened rightly to help them ; and they have therefore said, “What a providence !” Ah, but a providence that was meant to test and try, not a providence that was intended to aid and abet in the doing of a wrong thing : a providence not to rejoice in, but concerning which we are taught to pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” A wrong is a wrong, whatever comes of it. If by uttering one falsehood you could become a rich man for ever, it would not change the nature of the falsehood. If by doing one wrong transaction you could rid yourself from all liabilities in business, and be henceforth in competent circumstances, that would not, before God, take off the edge of the evil, nay, not a single jot. God was pleased, for wise reasons, to allow the policy of his erring servant Asa to prosper, but now you will see that Asa was put in a worse place than ever because of it.

The trial of Asa’s spirit, the testing of his unswerving faithfulness,

whether he would walk before God or not, became more severe than before, for God sent his servant the prophet to him, and he said to him, "When you came to God, and trusted him about the Ethiopians, did not God prosper you? Though there were so many of them, did not the Lord give you the victory? And now you have gone away from your faith, you have lost a great blessing by it; for if you had trusted in God, you would have gone to war against Baasha and Ben-hadad, and you would have beaten them both, and your own kingdom would have grown strong by the putting down of these rival kingdoms. But you have lost that; you have acted very foolishly, and God means to chasten you for it, for from this very day you will have no more peace, but you will have war so long as you are a king." Now, observe, if king Asa had met with a trouble when he acted unjustifiably, he would have been humble, I have no doubt. Then he would have seen how wrong he was, and he would have repented; but inasmuch as what he had done did not bring disaster with it, and God did not chasten him, the king's heart grew proud, and he said, "Who is this fellow that he should come to tell his king his duty? Does he think I do not know, as well as he can tell me, what is right and what is wrong? Put the arrogant intruder in prison." When a prophet came to Rehoboam, who was a bad king, Rehoboam did not put him in prison; he respected and revered the word of the Lord. A bad man may do better than a good man on some one particular occasion; and so Rehoboam did better in that matter than Asa did. But Asa was now all wrong, he was in a high hectoring spirit; and this was but what we might have expected, for whenever a man will cringe before his fellow-men, you may be sure he is beginning to walk proudly before God. In his haughtiness of heart he put the prophet in prison. Instead of weeping and humbling himself for what he had done, he imprisoned his reprover; and then, being in an irritable temper and a domineering humour, he began to oppress certain of his people. I do not know who they may have been, but probably they were godly persons who sympathised with the prophet, and said, "We shall surely meet with a terrible judgment for dealing thus with God's servant." Perhaps they spoke freely about it; and so he put them in prison too. Thus God's own child had become the persecutor of God's servant, and of other faithful ones. Oh, it was very sad, very sad! Well might God then resolve that the angry should smart for his faults very severely, that the rod should come home to his bone and his flesh, and render his remaining days exceeding sorrowful. O beloved friends, among your most earnest prayers pray God never to let your sins prosper; for if they do, they will breed a gangrene in your spirit, which will lead on to yet more dangerous diseases of soul, and will inevitably entail upon you a dreary inheritance of affliction. God does not always whip his children the next minute after they do wrong; sometimes he tells them that the rod will come, and so makes them smart in apprehension before they smart in actual experience, for they are thinking of what it will be, and that may be even a worse trial to them than the trial itself. But as surely as they are his own peculiar people, they must and shall be taught that sin is an exceeding great evil, and they shall have no joy of their dalliance with it.

Thus I have shown you who Asa was, and what faults he fell into, and how this led to other faults ; and now we have to show you *what God did with him when he came to a close reckoning*. "Now," he seemed to say, "I will take you in hand myself," and he sent him a disease in his feet—a very painful disease too. He had to suffer night and day ; he was tormented with it, and found no rest. God's own hand was heavy upon him ; and some of us know to our cost that disease in the feet can become a very grievous affliction, second indeed to none, unless it be a malady of the brain. Now did the king learn that embroidered slippers give no ease to gouty feet, and that sleep flies when disease bears rule. This should have driven Asa to repentance, but, to show that afflictions of themselves will not set a man right, Asa had fallen into such an unbelieving spirit that, instead of sending to God for help, and crying for relief to him who sent the disease, he sent for the physicians. It is not wrong to send for physicians, it is quite right ; but it is very wrong to send for physicians in place of crying to God, thus putting the human agency before the divine ; besides, it is very probable that these physicians were only heathenish conjurors, necromancers, and pretenders to magical arts, and could not be consulted without implicating the patient in their evil practices. Though Asa would not approve of their heathenism, yet he might think, "Well, they are famous for their cures, and who they may be is not so much my concern ; I will put up with that ; if they can cure me they may come." So his unbelief deprived him of the cure which God could readily enough have given him, and he had his physicians and their physic, but they were miserable comforters to him, giving him no relief, and probably causing him to suffer more than he would have suffered without them. They were physicians of no value, and their medicines were a delusion. How often is it so when we persist in looking away from God. He who has God has all, but he who has all besides God has really nothing at all.

Asa's life after that period was a life of war and pain. His evening was clouded, and his sun set in tempest. Have you never noticed the career of David ? What a happy life David's was up to one point ! In his youth he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, but he was very merry. What joyful psalms he used to sing when he was a humble shepherd-boy ! And when afterwards he was an exile in the caves of Engedi, how gloriously he poured out notes of gratitude and joy ! He was at that period, and for years after, one of the happiest of men. But that hour when he walked on the roof of his house, and saw Bathsheba, and gave way to his unholy desires, put an end to the happy days of David ; and though he was a child of God, and God never cast him away, yet his heavenly Father never ceased to chasten him. From that day his life teems with trouble—troubles from his own children one after another, ingratitude from his subjects, and annoyance from his enemies. Afflictions sprang up for him as plenteously as hemlock in the furrows. He became a weeping monarch instead of a rejoicing one. The whole tenor of his life is changed ; a sombre shade is cast over his entire image. You recognise him as the same man, but his voice is broken ; his music is deep bass, he cannot reach the high notes of the scale. From the hour in which he sinned he began

to sorrow more and more. So will it be with us if we are not watchful. We may have led very happy lives in Christ up to this moment, and we know the Lord will not cast us away, for he doth not cast away his people whom he did foreknow; but if we begin to walk distrustfully, and adopt wrong actions, and dishonour his name, he may from this moment say, "You only have I known of all the people of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities. Because I love you I will chasten you, for I chasten every son whom I love. And now, because you have thus gone astray, you shall be filled with your own backslidings. Your own vanities shall become your vexation throughout the rest of your days." Asa does not appear to have had any peace until at last he fell asleep, and then, I trust, his dying bed was as sweetly perfumed with penitence and pardon as his funeral couch was odoriferous with fragrant spices. The sweet spices of forgiving love and reviving faith were there, and he died rejoicing in his God, through the great sacrifice; brought back after a time of wandering, the cloudy day at last ending in a calm, bright evening. But who wishes to go so far astray, even if he be at length restored? O brethren, we do not merely want to go to heaven, but we desire to enjoy a heaven on the road to heaven. We would like not only to come up from the wilderness, but to come up from the wilderness leaning on our Beloved. We would not wish to be saved "so as by fire," but to have an abundant entrance administered to us into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Asa's character was well known among the people, and they loved and respected him. The mistake he had made grieved many of the godly, I do not doubt; but for all that, they felt that one fault must not blot out the recollection of nearly forty years of devoted service to God; so they loved him and they honoured him with a funeral worthy of a king, a funeral by which they expressed both their sorrow and their esteem. But may it never be said of you and of me, "He led a good life; he was eminent in the service of God, and did much; but there was an unhappy day in which the weakness of the flesh mastered the inner life." O dear sister, if you have brought up your children and have seen your family about you, and they have been proofs to all the world of the way in which you have walked with God, and of your care to discharge your duties, do not let your old age be given up to petulance and murmuring and complaining, so that your friends will have to say of you, "At the last she was not the happy Christian woman that she used to be." My dear brother, you have been a merchant, and you have resisted a great many temptations, and you have been noted for your honourable character, do not now in a moment of extreme trial begin to doubt your God. May the Holy Ghost preserve you from so great an ill. In the time of your need you will find the Lord to be Jehovah-jireh. He is no fair weather friend, but he is a shelter from the storm, a covert from the tempest. Stand fast in your faith in him. Do not question your God, and do questionable things in consequence, for, if you do, it will be said by those who come after you, and perhaps even while you live by those who love you, **was** a good man, but there was a sad period of weakness and

inconsistency, and though he was deeply penitent, yet from that unhappy day he went limping to his tomb."

What a precious Christ we have, who saves such sinners as we are at all! What a dear and blessed Lord we have, who does not cast us away, notwithstanding all our slips and falls and shameful wanderings. Beloved, let us not be so base as wantonly to grieve him:—

"We have no fear that thou shouldst lose
One whom eternal love could choose;
But we would ne'er this grace abuse.
Let us not fall. Let us not fall."

With such a warning as this of Asa before us now, do not let us relax our watchfulness and insensibly turn aside. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." That is your model; that is the promise which Scripture sets before you. Plead it, and try to realise it. Let us go from strength to strength. Let us ask to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If we have wanted props hitherto—outward and visible props—and have not been able altogether to rely upon God, may the Lord help us to grow stronger, so that we may have done with Ready-to-Halt's crutches. May we walk uprightly before the Lord, because we rely upon him, trusting ever in his sure faithfulness, and in the power which guarantees that his promise shall be fulfilled.

I do not know to whom I may be speaking a needful word, except that I know it is needful for myself. Peradventure there are some here to whom it may be just the word that is wanted. Dear brother, the life of faith is a blessed one; a believer's course is a tried one, it is a warfare; but, for all that, all the sorrows of faith put together do not equal in bitterness one drop of the sorrow of sin, or one grain of the misery of unbelief. The king's highway may be rough, but By-path Meadow in the long run is the rougher way of the two. It looks very pleasant to walk on the green turf, but, remember, it is only in appearance that By-path Meadow is smooth. The ways of Christ are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace, as compared with any other paths in the world; and if they were not—if to serve the Lord led us only into sorrow and trouble—I trust the loyal hearts here, the virgin souls whom Christ has chosen, would resolve through floods or flames, if Jesus led the way, to follow still. O beloved, may ye cleave to the Lord by a simple faith! May ye cleave to him when the many turn aside! May ye witness that he has the living Word, and none upon earth beside! Because your hearts are frail and feeble, ask him now to cast the bands of his love about you, and the cords of a man, to bind you fast to his altar, that you may not go away from it; for except he hold you fast, ye must, ye will decline, and prove apostates after all. But he will hold you; he will keep the feet of his saints. Only trust not in yourselves. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." If any man say, "I stand," let him take heed lest he fall. Beware of that self-confidence, and spiritual boasting, which is becoming common among Christians, ay, and among some of the better sort, who can even brag of their attainments; when, if they did

but know themselves, they would confess that they are nothing better; even at the best, than poor, naked, miserable sinners, and have need to look to Jesus, for they are nothing but empty boasters apart from him, since only in Christ are we anything. "When I am weak, then am I strong," but at no other time. When I think I have whereof to glory, then am I indeed despicable; I know not myself, and am become purblind, so as only to see what my own pride makes me think I see. May the Holy Ghost keep us humble—keep us at the cross-foot—keep us flat on the promise, resting on the eternal rock, and crying, "Nothing am I, Lord—nothing; but thou art all in all. I am all emptiness: come and fill me. I am all nakedness: come and clothe me. I am all weakness: come and glorify thy power, by making use of me!"

God bless you, dear friends, and if there be any among you who have not a God to trust in, or a Saviour to love, may you seek Jesus now! If you seek him he will be found of you; for whosoever believeth in him is saved, whosoever trusts Christ is saved. Pardon and salvation belong to every soul that hangs its hope upon the cross. May God bless you richly, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Parts of
2 Chron. xiv. xv. xvi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—668, 667.

NOW READY. PART XIV. PRICE ONE SHILLING.

THE INTERPRETER; OR, SCRIPTURE FOR FAMILY WORSHIP:

being selected passages of the Word of God for every morning and evening throughout the year, accompanied by a running comment and suitable hymns. By C. H. SPURGEON.

London: PASSMORE & ALABASTER, 4, Paternoster Buildings.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE MATCHLESS MYSTERY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."—Ephesians
v. 30.

I do not hesitate to say that this is one of the most wonderful texts in the whole compass of revelation. It sets forth the mystery of mysteries, the very pith and marrow of the loftiest divinity. It is fitted rather to be the theme for a hundred elaborate discourses than for one brief homily. Most assuredly it is a deep that knows no sounding, an abyss where thought plunges into never-ending contemplations. He who handles it had need, first of all, to be filled with all the fulness of God. Hence we feel incapable of dealing with it as it should be dealt with; it is all too great and vast for us, we can no more hope to compass it than a child can hold an ocean in his hand. Beloved, it is a text that must not be looked upon with the eyes of cold, theological orthodoxy, which might make us content to say, "Yes, that is a great and important truth," and there leave it. It is a text to be treated as the manna was that fell from heaven; namely, to be tasted, to be eaten, to be digested, and to be lived upon from day to day. It is a text for the quietude of your meditation, when you can sit still and turn it over, and, like Mary, ponder it in your hearts. Long and loving should be your gaze upon the facets of this diamond of truth, this Koh-i-noor of revelation. It is a golden sentence fitted for those choice hours when the King brings us into his banqueting house, and his banner over us is love; when the distance between earth and heaven has become less and less, till it scarce exists—those halcyon times when all is rest round about us, because he who is our rest enables us to lean upon his bosom and to feel his heart of love beating true to us.

I ask you, O my brethren, therefore, as though you were quite alone in your own chamber, to pray for that frame of mind which is suitable
Nos. 1,153-4.

to the subject, and to pray for me that I may be placed in that condition of heart which shall best enable me to speak upon it. We need our thoughts to be focused before they can reveal to us the great sight before us. Get to the place where Mary sat at Jesus' feet, and then will this text sound like music in your ears. Without any accompaniment of exposition from me, it will have all heaven's music in it: "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Sevenfold will be the happiness of the spirit which knows how to sit down and to taste of the marrow and the fatness, to drink of the "wine on the lees well refined," which are to be found in this inspired declaration.

Ere I preach upon it, there is one thing which it is necessary for us to do. They have a way in Scotland, before the communion, of "fencing the tables;" that is to say, warning all those who have no right to come to the table to avoid the sin of unlawful intrusion, and so of eating and drinking condemnation unto themselves. They help the hearers to self-examination, lest they should come thoughtlessly and participate in that which does not belong to them. Now, my text is like a table of communion richly loaded, and far hence be ye to whom it does not belong, except ye learn the sacred way of coming in by the door into this sheepfold, where the pasture is so rich and green. If ye come by Christ the way, come and welcome; if ye rest in him, if his dear wounds are the fountains of your life, and if his atoning sacrifice is your soul's only peace, come and welcome; for of you, and such as you, and all of us who are trusting in Jesus, it may be truly said, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." But if not believers in him, this heavenly verse has nothing to do with you. It is "the children's bread;" it belongs only to the children. It is Israel's manna; it falls for Israel. It is the stream which leaps from Israel's smitten rock, and flows neither for Edom, nor for Amalek, but for the chosen seed alone.

Look back, then, to the beginning of the epistle, and see of whom the apostle was speaking when he said "*we*." This little word "*we*" is like the door of Noah's ark, it shuts out and shuts in. Does it shut us out or in?

Now, the apostle wrote his epistle to those of whom he said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Answer thou this question, thou who wouldst enjoy this text, Hast thou made thy calling and election sure? Has that matter ever been decided in thy spirit after honest search and inquiry into the grounds of thy confidence? Hast thou been led to choose thy God, for if so thy God had long ago chosen thee, and that matter is ascertained beyond all question, and out of it springs the undoubted assurance that you are one with him, since of all whom he has chosen it is true, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

The apostolic description is before you, I pray you read on: "Having predestinated us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Knowest thou any-

thing about adoption? Hast thou been taken out of the family of Satan and enrolled in the family of God? Hast thou the Spirit of adoption in thee? Does thy soul cry "Abba, Father," at the very thought of God? Art thou an imitator of God as a dear child? Dost thou feel that thy nature has been renewed, so that, whereas thou wast a child of wrath, even as others, thou hast now become a child of God? Judge, I pray thee, and discern concerning these things, for on thine answer to this question depends thy condition before God, thy union with Christ, or thy separateness from him.

Note, still, the apostle's words as you read on, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Dear hearer, dost thou know the meaning of those last words, "Accepted in the beloved"? Thou canst never be accepted in thyself; thou art sinful, and undone, and unworthy; but hast thou come and cast thyself upon the work, the blood, and the righteousness of Jesus, and art thou therefore accepted, "Accepted in the beloved"? Hast thou ever enjoyed a sense of acceptance, so that thou couldst draw near to God, as no longer a servant beneath the curse, but a son beneath the blessing? If so, come and welcome to the text; it is all thine own.

But note the next verse:—"In whom we have redemption through his blood." Oh, dear hearers, do you know *the blood*? I do not care what else you know if you do not know the blood; nor do I much mind what else you do *not* know. You may differ very widely in doctrine from some of the truths which I think I have learned from the word of God, but do you know the blood? Were you ever washed in it? Have you seen it sprinkled over-head and on the side-posts of the house wherein you dwell, so that the destroying angel passes you by? Is the blood of Christ the life-blood of your hope? God save me from preaching, and you from believing in a bloodless theology. It is a dead theology. Take Christ away, take the atonement by a substitutionary sacrifice away, and what is there left? But, oh, if we in very deed have redemption through his blood, then we are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

The apostle adds, "The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." And here, again, I press home the question upon the consciences of the members of this church, and upon the members of every professing church of Christ—Have you tasted forgiveness? Have you felt the burden of sin? Have you gone with that burden to the foot of the cross? Has the Heavenly Father ever said to you, "Thy sins are forgiven thee"? Do you believe in the forgiveness of sins, and that in reference to yourselves? Oh, do not be satisfied unless you do. Do not be put off with a bare hope that perhaps your sin is forgiven you, but struggle after that blessed full assurance which is able to say—

"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of my Saviour's precious blood,
With divine assurance knowing
He has made my peace with God!"

And if you do so know, possess, and enjoy the forgiveness of sins, then are you "members of his body, of *his flesh*, and of his bones."

Oh, how this last sentence concerning pardon and rich grace seems to cheer my soul ! If none might come but those who never sinned, my guilty soul could never venture near the Lord. If none might come but those who have committed little sin, then must I be debarred. But it is "the forgiveness of sins" on a grand scale. Let me read the words: "The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." So it is great forgiveness, the forgiveness of great sin, because of great love. O beloved hearer, great sinner as you have been, yet if you are "accepted in the Beloved," and have "redemption through his blood," then all that is in the text belongs to you ; so I will keep you waiting in the vestibule no longer, but set the door wide open, saying, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord. Wherefore standest thou without?" I pray the Holy Ghost to help you to come in to this high festival, give you a sacred appetite, and enable you now to appreciate the extraordinary sweetness of the words before us.

First, I shall try and expound—and it must be but feebly—*what the text means*, and, secondly, *what the text secures*.

I. First, WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN ? "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Read it in the light of the second chapter of the book of Genesis, for it is evident that there is a distinct allusion to the creation of Eve. The very words of Adam are quoted, and we are mentally conducted to that scene in the garden of Eden when the first man gazed upon the first woman, created to be his dear companion and helpmeet. What did Adam mean when he used these words ? for the great husband of our souls must mean the same, only in a more spiritual and emphatic sense.

And, first, there was meant here *similarity of nature*. Adam looked at Eve, and he did not regard her as a stranger, as some creature of a different genus and nature ; but he said, "She is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." He meant that she was of the same race, a participant in the same nature ; he recognised her as a being of the same order as himself. Now, that is a low meaning of the text, but it is one meaning. Brethren, beloved, think of this truth for a moment. Jesus, the Son of God, counted it not robbery to be equal with God. "Without him was not anything made that was made." He is "very God of very God." Yet he deigned for love of us to take upon himself our nature, and he did it completely, so that he assumed the whole of human nature, apart from its sin ; and in that respect we may say of ourselves—that we are "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh." The very nature which we wear on earth Christ Jesus once carried about among us, and at last carried aloft to heaven. You believe in his Godhead, take heed never to commingle his Godhead and his humanity. Remember, Christ was not a deified man, neither was he a humanised God. He was perfectly God, and at the same time perfectly man, made like unto his brethren in all things. Dwell for a moment upon this truth, for the text sets it forth. Born of a human mother, and swaddled like another child, he was from his birth as perfectly human even as you are. In nothing did he differ from you except in this, that he never wandered from God and broke his commands, and he was not defiled with that hereditary taint of original sin which dwelleth in you by nature. The like

depressions to those which sadden your spirit he knew ; the temptations of your nature assailed him ; men and devils both sought to influence him. He was amenable to all the external physical arrangements of the globe. On him the shower pelted down, and wetted his garments ; and on him the burning sun poured forth its undiminished heat. Upon his sacred person on the lone mountain-side, the dews descended till his head was wet with them, and his locks with the drops of the night. For him there were poverty, and hunger, and thirst, reproach, slander, and treachery. For him the sea tossed the barque as it will for you ; and for him the land yielded thorn and thistle, as it does to you. He suffered, he ate, he toiled, he rested, he wept, and he rejoiced, even as you do, sin alone excepted. A real kinsman was he, not in fiction, but in substantial reality. Are you man? Jesus was a man. Do not doubt it. Do not look at your Lord as standing up there on a pinnacle of superior nature, where you cannot come near him, but view him as your own flesh and blood, "a brother born for adversity." For so he is. He comes to you and says, "Handle me and see. A spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me have." He invites your faith to look at the prints of the nails, and the scar of the spear-thrust. Did he not, after he had risen from the dead, prove his true humanity by eating a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb? And that same humanity has gone to heaven. The clouds received it out of our sight, but it is there.

"A man there was, a real man,
Who once on Calvary died ;
And streams of blood and water ran
Down from his wounded side."

That same blest man exalted sits high on his Father's throne. Believe this, and you will see how he is bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh.

And then recollect that, as his nature is as yours, so, in another sense, he has made your nature as his ; for you are born again, and gifted with a higher life. You were carnal ; he has now made you spiritual. You could not drink of his cup, or be baptised with his baptism, till his Spirit had come upon you. But now ye are made "partakers of the divine nature,"—strong words, but scriptural : "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." "For as ye have borne the image of the earthy Adam, ye shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Now you, as spiritual men, cry out to God in prayer, and so did he when he was here. Now you are in an agony as you strive with God, and so was he, but the bloody sweat is a part of his substitutionary work, in which he trod the wine-press alone. His meat and drink was to do the will of him that sent him, and it is yours, I trust ; at any rate, it should be if you are your Lord's. He lived for God ; he lived and died for love of men ; and that same love of God and man, though in a feebler measure, burns within your heart. You are, therefore, now made by his grace to participate in his moral and spiritual nature, and you will never be satisfied till you awake in his likeness. But you will awake in his likeness, so that when he sees you and you see him, then

shall be abundantly manifest to you that you are a member "of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones:"—

"Such was thy grace, that for our sake
Thou didst from heaven come down,
Thou didst of flesh and blood partake,
In all our sorrows ONE.

"Ascended now, in glory bright,
Still ONE with us thou art ;
Nor life, nor death, nor depth, nor height,
Thy saints and thee can part.

"Oh, teach us, Lord, to know and own
This wondrous mystery,
That thou with us art truly ONE,
And we are ONE with thee !

"Soon, soon shall come that glorious day,
When, seated on thy throne,
Thou shalt to wondering worlds display,
That thou with us art ONE !"

Similarity of nature, then, is the first meaning of the text.

Regard, I pray you, brethren, with much solemn attention, a higher step of the ladder. It signifies *intimate relationship*, for I hardly think that Adam would have said quite so strongly, "She is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," if he had thought that the woman would disappear, or would become the wife of another. It was because she was to be his helpmeet, and they were to be joined together in bonds of the most intimate communion, that therefore he said, "Not only is she of the same bone and flesh as I am, but she is bone of *my* bones, and flesh of *my* flesh. She is related to me." What a near and dear and loving relationship marriage has bestowed upon us ! It is a blessing for which good men dwelling with affectionate wives praise God every day they live. Marriage and the Sabbath are the two choice boons of primeval love that have come down to us from Paradise, the one to bless our outer and the other our inner life. Oh, the joy, the true, pure, elevated peace and joy which many of us have received through that divinely ordained relationship ! We cannot but bless God every time we repeat the dear names of those who are now parts of ourselves. Marriage creates a relationship which ends only when death doth us part. It may be dissolved. Alas, sin enters even here ! A dark crime may be committed, but, with the exception of that, it is for life—for better, for worse ; only the mortal stroke can part. Now think of it. As is your relation, O woman, to your husband, and as is your relation, O man, to your wife, such is the relation which exists between you, as a believer in Jesus, and Christ Jesus your Lord. It is the nearest, dearest, closest, most intense, and most enduring relationship that can be imagined. I love and bless God for ever declaring that his relationship to us may be likened to that of a father or a mother to a child. Did you ever hear those words without tears—(I think I never did)—"Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? Yea, they may forget ; yet will not I forget thee." And yet there is a closer intimacy, somehow, in the relationship which is declared in

it, because there is a kind of equality between the married couple, tempered by that headship of which the apostle speaks, and we delight to recognise in our beloved Lord towards ourselves. Child cannot, while it is yet a babe, at any rate, enter into its mother's feelings; it is far below the mother; but the wife communes with her husband, she is lifted up to his level; she is made a partaker of his joys and sorrows, of his joys and his successes, and the intimacy of their conjugal union is of the closest kind. Now—again—and I cannot open it up further than to say it—such is the relationship between the believer's soul and the Lord Jesus. Well did the apostle break out with the rapturous language, which forms the basis of the song—"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine," as if she did not need to describe the relationship, but longed to enjoy the sweets of it. My brother, you may so enjoy it; that now, if you be poor in this world, you are an orphan, if you be almost a lone one in this great city, you are "No longer am I an orphan, no longer am I alone. My Father is my husband. The Lord of Hosts is his name, and my Father is the Mighty One of Israel; and from this day forth will I say that I am bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh." Similarity of position, and closeness of relationship, are evidently in the text.

It clearly sees another and deeper meaning. It meant, from the beginning, *mysterious extraction*. I will not make bold to say that Christ knew what had occurred to him in his sleep. He might not have known, but he seems to have had a mystic enlightenment which enabled him to guess what had occurred—at least the words seem to me to ring in them. "She is bone of my bones"—for a bone had been taken from him, "and flesh of my flesh," for out of him had she been taken. He seems to have known that somehow or other she was of him. Whether he knew it or not, Christ knows right well of his spouse. He knew where his church came from. He saw the mark in his side still: there is the memorial in the flesh of his hands and on his feet. Whence came this new Eve, the mother of all living? Whence came this spouse of the second Adam? She came of the second Adam. She was taken from him, full near his heart. Have you never read, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit"? Had Jesus never died, he would have been alone to abide alone as to any who could be help-meets for him, could not enter into fellowship with him; but, inasmuch as he has died, he has brought forth much fruit, and his church has sprung from him. In that sense she is bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh. I mean I by the church? says one. I mean by the church all the redeemed of God, all the redeemed, all believers, as I explained at the beginning. Think you I mean by the church the harlot of the scriptures? God forbid that Christ should have fellowship with her! Can he so much as look upon her except with horror? Means he the church the politically supported corporation that men call a church now-a-days? Nay, but the spiritual, the quickened, the living, the believing, the holy people, wherever they may be, or by whatsoever name they may be called. These are they that sprang of Christ, even

as Levi from the loins of Abraham. They live because they receive life from him, and at this day they are dead in themselves, and their life is hid with Christ in God. So the text leads us to a deep meditation as to mysterious extraction.

But I find the time goes too swiftly for me, and I must observe next that I am sure that in the text there is more than this. There is, in the fourth place, *loving possession*. He said, "She is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh;" he felt she was his own, and belonged solely to him. Of anything there might be in the garden, Adam was but owner in the second degree; but when he saw her, he felt she was all his own. By bonds and ties which did not admit of dispute, his bone and his flesh was she. Now, beloved, at this moment let this thought dance through your soul: you belong to Jesus, altogether you belong to Jesus. Let not your love go forth to earthly things, so soiled and dim; but send it all away, up to him to whom you belong; ay, send it all to him. "Set not your affection upon things on the earth," but set it all upon things above, for you belong wholly to your Lord. All that there is of your spirit, soul, and body, the treble kingdom of your nature, Christ has purchased by his blood. It were a dark thought to cross a man's mind, that his spouse belonged in part to some other. It could not be. And will you provoke your Lord to jealousy? Will you suffer it to seem so by your actions or your words? Nay, rather say to-night anew,

" 'Tis done, the great transaction's done:
I am my Lord's, and he is mine.
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.

" High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

"For ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." We belong entirely unto him.

And to close this exposition—this skimming of the surface, rather—there is one more matter, and this is the very essence of the meaning. A *vital union* exists between us and Christ. When the apostle was showing that we were one with Christ, as the wife is with the husband, he felt that the metaphor, though it set forth much, did not set forth all. He would have us know that we are more closely knit to Jesus than is a woman to her husband; for they are, after all, separate individualities, and they may act, and too often do so, far too distinctly for themselves. But here he puts it, "We are members of his body." Now, here is a vital union, the closest imaginable. It is not unity; it is identity. It is more than being joined to; it is being made a part of, and an essential part of the whole. Do you think I strain the text, and go beyond the fact? Listen to this word. The apostle, in speaking of the church, said, concerning Christ, that the church was his body, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." And note the majesty of that speech—that the church should be the fulness of Christ. Now, Christ, without his fulness, is evidently not full: he must have his

people; they are essential to him. The idea of a Saviour is lost, apart from the saved. He is a head without a body if there be no members. What without his people is Jesus but a king without subjects, and a shepherd without a flock? It is essential to any true thought of Christ, that you think of his people. They must come in. They are one with him in every true view of Jesus Christ our Lord.

How we are one with him! Ah, brethren, much might be said, but I fear little would be explained by words. I want you to feel it, and to be comforted by the fact of the vital union of Jesus and his saints. Have you never heard him say to you—

"I feel at my heart all thy sighs and thy groans,
For thou art most near me, my flesh and my bones.
In all thy distresses thy head feels the pain,
They all are most needful, not one is in vain"?

Oh, do get to know this, you tried and tempted ones, you poor poverty-stricken people of God, you who could not help coming here to-night, wet as it was, because you must have spiritual meat, you were so hungry after your Lord. Oh, do get this morsel now, and feed on it. You are one with him. You were "buried in him in baptism unto death," wherein also you have risen with him. You were crucified with him upon the cross; you have gone up into heaven with him, for he has raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And surely you shall be actually in your very person with him where he is, that you may behold his glory. You are one with him.

Now, tie up these five truths like five choice flowers, in a nosegay. Blend them like sweet spices, and let them be a bundle of camphire and a cluster of myrrh, to lie all night upon your bosom, to give you rest and to sweeten your repose. There is between you and your Lord a similarity of nature, and an intimate relationship; you have a mysterious extraction from him, and he has a loving possession of you, and a vital union with you.

Come, now, we must only have a few minutes to catch some of the juice that will flow out of these clusters of Eshcol while we tread them for a moment, just to show what the wines of the kingdom are like. WHAT DOES THE TEXT SECURE?

First, it seems to me, that the text secures the eternal safety of every one who is one with Christ. You know the figure we often use, that when a man's head is above water you cannot drown his feet; and as long as my Head is in glory, though I be but the sole of his foot, and only worthy to be trodden in the mire, how can ye drown me? Is it not written, "Because I live ye shall live also"—all of you who are one with him? The idea of Christ losing members of his body is to me grotesque, and at the same time ghastly. Does he change his members like some aquatic creatures which shoot their limbs and get fresh joints? I trow it is not so with Christ, the second Adam. Will he lose his members? Can he lose *one* member? Then can he lose *all*?

"If ever it should come to pass
That sheep of Christ could fall away,
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,
Would fall a thousand times a day."

But herein lies our safety; "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." I know that some have perverted this blessed truth into the wicked lie that the Christian man may live as he likes, and yet be safe. No such doctrine is to be found between the covers of that book; the doctrine of the safety of the saints is far other than that. It is that the renewed man shall live as God likes, shall persevere in holiness and hold on his way, until he arrives at the blessed perfection of his Lord, changing from glory to glory into that image which he shall reach and possess for ever. I see—I pity those who do not see it, but I will not blame—I see, I think, strong reason for believing in the security of every soul which is one with Christ.

But, next, I see here a very sweet thought. If I am one with Christ, then I certainly enjoy, above all things, his love. Last Saturday week in the evening I was trying to turn over this text to preach to you from it in the morning; but I was wrung with bitter pains which made me feel that I should not preach, and kept me wearily waiting through the night watches. But do you know what comforted me very much about the text? It was that sentence which is a near neighbour of it: "No man ever yet hated his own flesh." I seized upon that, and my sad heart cried out, "Surely the Man Christ Jesus never yet hated his own flesh." If we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, he may chasten, he may correct, and lay on heavy strokes, and give sharp twinges, and make us cry out; he may even thrust us in the fire, and heat the furnace seven times hotter; but he never can neglect and abhor his own flesh. Still is there love in his heart. I hate no part of my body, not even when it aches. I hate it not but love it still; it is a part of myself; and so doth Jesus love his people. And you, poor sinners, who feel that you are not worthy to be called his people, nevertheless his love goes out to you, despite your imperfections. Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them to the end, and he has left it upon record, "As my Father hath loved me, even so have I loved you. Continue ye in my love."

Another most enchanting thought also arises from our subject. The apostle goes on to say, "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Oh, those two words, "nourisheth it." Are you living in a district where you do not get the gospel? Well, then, go to the gospel's Lord and say to him, "Lord, hate not thine own flesh, but nourish me." Have you been for a while without visits from Christ? have you lost the light of his countenance? Do not be satisfied with nourishing: go further and plead for cherishing. Ask for those love tokens, for those gentle words, for those secret blandishments, known to saints, and to none but saints, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him and he will show them his covenant." Go and ask for both these forms of love, and you shall be nourished and cherished. The good husband does not merely bring so much bread and meat into the house and fling it down, saying, "There, that will nourish you." Oh, not so, but there are tender words and kindly acts, by which he cherishes as well as nourishes. And your Lord will not only give you bread to eat which the world knows not of, but he will give it you according to his loving

kindness and the multitude of his tender mercies : for he maketh us to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth us beside the still waters, gently guiding as a shepherd conducts his flock. Rejoice, then, that your nourishing and your cherishing are secure.

I will not keep you longer when I have said this much. If we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, then he will one day present us to himself, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," for the whole body must be so presented. Alas, our spots are many, and sadly mar our beauty! Brethren, I love not to think little of my spots. I wish I had not even a speck. Alas, our wrinkles! Let us not talk lightly of them. It is most sad that on the Beloved's darling there should be a solitary blot. It is the worst wrinkle of all when a man does not see his own wrinkles, and when he does not mourn over them. But spots and wrinkles there are. I hope we do not say, "Yes, they are there," and then add, "And they must be there." No, beloved, they ought not to be there: there ought to be no sin in us. If there be a sin which ought to be upon us, why it is clear it is no sin. A thing that ought to be is not a sin. If we served our Master as he deserves to be served, we should never sin, but our lives would be perfect; and therefore it is our daily burden that the spots and wrinkles still will show; and this is our consolation, that he will one day present us to himself, holy and without blemish, "not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

"Oh, glorious hour, oh, blest abode;
I shall be near, and like my God.
Nor spot nor wrinkle shall remain,
His perfect image to profane."

It will be a blessed thing indeed to have attained to this, to wear the image of the heavenly, and be perfect even as our Bridegroom is perfect.

Then, remember, all the glory Christ has we shall share in. You cannot honour a warrior who returns from the wars, and say to him, "Great general, we honour your head." Oh, no; he who fought his country's battles, and won the victory, when he was honoured was altogether honoured as a man. And when the Master at the last shall have finished all his work, and the whole battle that he undertook being finished, and the victory gained, he enters perfectly into his joy, we shall enter into the joy of our Lord. Does he sit upon a throne? He has said we shall sit upon his throne. Has he triumphed? We shall bear the palm branch, too. Whatever he has we shall share. Are we not heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ? My soul feels ready to leap right away from this body at the thought of the glory that shall be revealed in us—not in Paul and Peter only, but *in us*. Poor things, poor things, that struggle hard each day with infirmities and trials, ye shall be with him where he is, and shall behold his glory for ever. "So shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

"Since Christ and we are one,
Why should we doubt or fear?
If he in heaven hath fixed his throne,
He'll fix his members there."

In this spirit come ye to the communion table, and find your **Mast** there. But oh, if you are not resting in him, if the blood was never upon you, you are condemned already, because you have not believed on the Son of God; and I pray that your bed may be cold and hard as a stone to you to-night, and your eyes may forget to sleep, and your heart may know no rest till you have said, "I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned." Then take with you Jesus as a mediator, and draw nigh to the throne of grace. Go, plead his blood and merits, and you shall live; and then you, too, shall be able to join with the saints who say, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Amen. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis ii. 18;
Ephesians v. 22—33.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—761, 762.

I have revised this sermon at Cannes, to which place I have come for health. I am happy to inform all friends that I am already much better. The influences of warm, sunny climate, and rest from great labour, are being blessed by infinite mercy to my restoration. I commend the work I am obliged to leave to the prayers of God's people; and I desire also to thank numerous friends for their substantial help to the College and Orphanage, so that I am not tempted to be anxious about funds for those objects at a time when ease of mind is especially desirable. With this I send most loving salutations to all my readers. May the Lord send to our beloved land a great revival of true religion.

C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

DANIEL FACING THE LIONS' DEN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."—Daniel vi. 10.

DANIEL was of royal race, and, what is far better, he was of royal character. He is depicted on the pages of scriptural history as one of the greatest and most faultless of men. How grand and impressive his first appearance as a young man, when he was introduced to Nebuchadnezzar! The Chaldeans and magicians and astrologers had all failed to divine the secret which perplexed the king and troubled his spirit; till at length there stood up before him this young prince of the house of Judah to tell his dream and the interpretation thereof. No wonder that the excellent spirit which shone in him led to his being made a great man, procured for him rich gifts, and led to his promotion amongst the governors of Babylon. In after days he showed his dauntless courage when he interpreted the memorable dream of Nebuchadnezzar, in which the king's pride was threatened with a terrible judgment. It needed that he should be a lion-like man to say to the king, "Thou, O king, shalt be driven from among men, and eat grass as oxen, and thy body shall be wet with the dew of heaven, till thy hairs are grown like eagles' feathers, and thy nails like birds' claws." Yet what he told him came true, for all this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel discharged his duty to his conscience, so there was nothing to disquiet him. Well might he have said—

"I feel within me
A peace above all earthly dignities,
A still and quiet conscience."

In lurid light, in terrible grandeur, Daniel comes forth again, on the last night of Belshazzar's reign, when the power of Babylon was broken

for ever. The Persians had dried up the river, and were already at the palace doors. "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting," said the prophet, as he pointed to the mysterious handwriting on the wall. After this he appears again, and this time in a personal dilemma of his own. Great as he was in the palace, and great in the midst of that night's carousal, he appears, if possible, greater, because the faith that animates him shines more radiantly when he is upon his knees. The princes have conspired against him. They have, by fraud, perverted the king's mind, so that he has passed an edict. Though Daniel knows that it is contrary to the law of the realm for him to pray or ask a petition of any god or man save of king Darius, yet he does pray and give thanks before his God. In the higher sovereignty of the King of kings he believes; and to the edicts of his everlasting kingdom he yields fearless and unqualified obedience. The sequel shows that the Most High God delivers him. Of this Daniel we are about to speak to you.

I. Our first point will be that DANIEL'S PRAYERFULNESS WAS THE SECRET OF HIS POWER. Daniel was always a man of prayer. If you saw him great before the people, the reason was because he was great before his God. He knew how to lay hold of divine strength, and he became strong. He knew how to study divine wisdom, and he became wise.

We are told that *he went to his house to pray*. He was a great man—the highest in the land—consequently he had great public duties. He would sit as a judge probably a large part of the day. He would be engaged in the various state offices distributing the favours of the king; but he did not pray in his office, save of course that his heart would go up in adoration of his God all day long. He was in the habit of going to his house to pray. This showed that he made a business of prayer, and finding it neither convenient to his circumstances nor congenial to his mind to pray in the midst of idolaters, he had chosen to set apart a chamber in his own house for prayer. I don't know how you find it, but there are some of us who never pray so well as by the old arm-chair, and in that very room where many a time we have told the Lord our grief, and have poured out before him our transgressions. It is well to have, if we can have, a little room, no matter how humble, where we can shut to the door, and pray to our Father who is in heaven, who will hear and answer.

He was in the habit of praying thus three times a day. He had not only his appointed seasons of morning prayer and of evening prayer, as most believers have; but he had his noon-day retirement for prayer, as perhaps only a few have. He was an old man, over eighty years of age at this time, but he did not mind taking three journeys to his house to pray. He was a very busy man. Probably no one here has half so much important business to transact daily as Daniel had, for he was set over all the empire, and yet he found time regularly to devote three stated intervals for prayer. Perhaps he thought that this was prudent economy, for, if he had so much to do, he must pray the more; as Martin Luther said, "I have got so much to do to-day that I cannot possibly get through it with less than three hours of prayer." So, perhaps, Daniel felt that the extraordinary pressure of his engage-

ments demanded a proportionate measure of prayer to enable him to accomplish the weighty matters he had on hand. He saluted his God, and sought counsel of him when the curtains of the night were drawn, and when his eyelids opened at the day dawn, as well as when the full sunlight was poured out from the windows of heaven. Blessing the Lord of the darkness, who was also the Lord of the light, Daniel thrice a day worshipped his God.

A singularity in his manner is noticeable here. *He had been in the habit of praying with his windows open towards Jerusalem.* This had been his wont: by long use it had become natural to him, so he continued the practice as heretofore; though it was not essential to prayer, he scorned to make any alteration, even in the least point. Now that the decree had been signed that he must not pray, he would not only pray, but he would pray just as often as he had done, in the same place and the same attitude, and the same indifference to publicity, with the windows open. Thus openly did he ignore the decree! With such a royal courage did he lift his heart above the fear of man, and raise his conscience above the suspicion of compromise. He would not shut the window, because he had been accustomed to pray with it open. He prayed with his window open towards Jerusalem, the reason being that the temple was being built, and if he could not go himself, at any rate he would look that way. This showed that he loved his native land. Great man as he was, he did not scorn to be called a Jew, and everybody might know it. He was "*that Daniel of the children of the captivity of Judah.*" He was not ashamed to be accounted one of the despised and captive race. He loved Jerusalem, and his prayers were for it. Hence he looked that way in his prayer. And I think also he had an eye to the altar. It was the day of symbol. That day is now past. We have no altar save Christ our Lord; but, beloved, we turn our eyes to him when we pray. Our window is open to Jerusalem that is above, and towards that altar whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle with outward religiousness. We worship with our eye to Christ. And during that age of symbol Daniel saw by faith the realities that were foreshadowed. His eyes were turned towards Jerusalem, which was the type and symbol of the one Lord Jesus Christ. So he prayed with his window open. I cannot help admiring the open window, because it would admit plenty of fresh air. There is much good in fresh air; the more the better. We do not want our bodies to be sleepy, or our senses sluggish, for if they are we cannot keep our souls awake and our spirits lively.

And it would appear that *whenever Daniel prayed he mingled his supplication with thanksgiving.* He "prayed and gave thanks." I wonder if he sang a psalm; perhaps he did. At any rate prayer and praise, orisons and psalms, sweetly blend in his worship. He could not ask for more grace without gratefully acknowledging what he had already received. Oh, mix up thanks with your prayers, beloved! I am afraid we do not thank God enough. It ought to be as habitual to us to thank as to ask. Prayer and praise should always go up to heaven arm in arm, like twin angels walking up Jacob's ladder, or like kindred aspirations soaring up to the Most High.

I will not say more of this feature of Daniel's character. Oh, that we might all emulate it more than we have ever done! How few of us fully appreciate and fondly cultivate that communion with God to which secret prayer, continuously, earnestly offered, is the key and the door! Could we not all of us devote more time to seeking the Lord in the stillness of the closet greatly to our advantage? Have not all of us who have tried it found an ample recompense? Should we not be stronger and better men if we were more upon our knees? As to those of you who never seek unto the King eternal, how can ye expect to find him? how can you look for a blessing which you never ask for? How can you hope that God will save you, when the blessings he does give you you never thank him for, but receive them with cold ingratitude, casting his word behind your back? Oh, for Daniel's prayerful spirit!

II. We pass on to DANIEL'S DIFFICULTIES, OR THE PRIVILEGES OF PRAYER. Daniel had always been a man of prayer; but now there is a law passed that he must not pray for thirty days, for a whole calendar month. I think I see Daniel as he reads the writing. Not proud and haughty in his demeanour, for, as a man used to govern, it was not likely that he would needlessly rebel; but as he read it, he must have felt a blush upon his cheek for the foolish king who had become the blind dupe of the wily courtiers who had framed a decree so monstrous. Only one course was open to him. He knew what he meant to do: he should do what he always had done. Still, let us face the difficulty with a touch of sympathy. He must not pray. Suppose we were under a like restriction. I will put a supposition for a minute. Suppose the law of the land were proclaimed, "No man shall pray during the remainder of this month, on pain of being cast into a den of lions,"—how many of you would pray? I think there would be rather a scanty number at the prayer-meeting. Not but what the attendance at prayer-meetings is scanty enough now! but if there were the penalty of being cast into a den of lions, I am afraid the prayer-meeting would be postponed for a month, owing to pressing business, and manifold engagements of one kind and another. That it would be so, not here only, but in many other places, I should be prone to anticipate. And how about private prayer? If there were informers about, and a heavy reward was offered to tell of anybody who bowed the knee night or morning, or at any time during the day, for the next thirty days, what would you do? Why, some persons will say, "I will give it up." Ah, and there are some who would boastfully say, "I will not give it up," whose bold resolve would soon falter, for a lion's den is not a comfortable place. Many thought they could burn in Queen Mary's days that did not dare to confront the fire, though I think it almost always happened that whenever any man through fear turned

back, he met with a desperate death at last. There was one who could not burn for Christ, but about a month afterwards he was burnt to death in bed in his own house. Who has forgotten Francis Spira, that dreadful apostate, whose dying bed was a foretaste of hell? It is left on record, as a well authenticated narrative of the miseries of despair, though it is scarcely ever read now-a-days, for it is far too dreadful for one to think upon. If we quail at suffering for Christ, and leave his cross, we may have to encounter a fiercer doom than the terror from which, in our craven panic, we shrunk. Men have declined to carry a light burden, and been constrained to bear a far heavier one. They have fled from the bear, and the lion has met them; they have sought to escape from the serpent, but the dragon has devoured them. To shrink from duty is always perilous. To demoralise yourselves in demoralised times is a desperate alternative. Better go forward, better go forward. Better, I say, even though you may have no armour. The safest thing is to go on. Even if there are lions in front, it is better to go ahead, for if you turn your back the stars in their courses will fight against you. "Remember Lot's wife!" She looked back, and was turned into a pillar of salt. The apostate is of all creatures the most terrible delinquent; his crime is akin to that of Satan, and the apostate's doom is the most dreadful that can be conceived. Master Bunyan pictures—(what was the man's name? I forget for the moment)—one Turnaway (was it not?) who was bound by seven devils, and he saw him taken by the back way to hell, for he had been a damnable apostate from the faith as it is in Jesus. It may be hard going forward, but it is worse going back.

Now it is a great privilege that we enjoy civil and religious liberty in our favoured land; that we are not under such cruel laws, as in other times or in other countries laid restrictions upon conscience; and that we may pray, according to the conviction of our judgment and the desire of our heart. But as I want you to value the privilege very much, I will put a supposition to you. Suppose there was only one place in the world where a man might pray and offer his supplications unto God. Well, I think there is not a man among us that would not like to get there at some time or other, at least to die there. Oh, what pains we should take to reach the locality, and what pressure we would endure to enter the edifice! If there were only one house of prayer in all the world, and prayer could be heard nowhere else, oh, what tugging and squeezing and toiling, there would be to get into that one place! But now that people may pray anywhere, how they slight the exercise and neglect the privilege!

"Where'er we seek him he is found,
And every place is hallowed ground."

Yet it would argue sad ingratitude, if seeking were therefore less earnest or prayer less frequent. And suppose there was only one man in the world who might pray, and that one man was the only person who might be heard, oh, if there was to be an election for that man, surely the stir to get votes for that man would be far more exciting than for your School Boards or your representatives in Parliament. Oh, to get to that man and ask him to pray for us ; what overwhelming anxiety it would cause ! When the promoters and directors of railways had shares to dispose of during the old mania, how they were stopped in the streets by others who wished to get them and secure the premiums they carried in the market ! But the man who was entrusted with the sole power of prayer in the world would surely have no rest day or night : we should besiege his house with petitions, and ask him to pray for us. But now that we may each pray for ourselves, and the Lord Jesus waits to hear those who seek him, how little is prayer regarded ! And suppose nobody could pray unless he paid for the privilege, then what grumblings there would be from the poor, what meetings of the working men, because they could not pray without so many pounds of money. And what a spending of money there would be ! What laying out of gold and silver to have the privilege of speaking to God in prayer ! But now that prayer is free, without money and without price, and the poorest need not bring a farthing when he comes to have audience with God, oh, how prayer is neglected ! Perhaps it would not be a bad thing on some accounts if there could be a law to prevent men from praying ; because some would say, “ We *will* pray.” They *would* pray. They would get over the traces and stoutly protest, “ We are not to be kept down, we *must* pray.” Suppose I were bound to tell you now that God would not hear your prayers all next week, you would be afraid to abide in your houses, and you would be equally afraid to leave them. You would be scared with terrors in your bed, and you would be afraid to get up and face the perils of moving about. You would say, “ Whatever happens, I cannot ask God for his blessing ; whatever I do, I cannot expect his blessing on it, for I must not pray.” Then, perhaps, you would begin to wish that you could pray. Oh, dear soul, do not live this night through without prayer ! Get you to the mercy seat ! Let sin be confessed to God. Let pardon be sought, and all the blessings of grace. Do not despise or turn away from that blessed mercy seat which stands open to every soul that desires to draw near unto God.

III. Having thus dwelt upon Daniel's difficulty, I now want to draw your attention to DANIEL'S DECISION. The king says he must not pray. Daniel did not deliberate for a single minute. When we know our duty, first thoughts are the best. If the thing be obviously right, never think about it a second time ; but straightway go and do it. Daniel

did not deliberate. He went to his house and prayed in the morning ; he went to his house and prayed at noon ; and he retired to his house and prayed at eventide. "He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."

I greatly admire one feature in Daniel's decision. He did not alter his accustomed habit in any single particular. Without disguise and without parade he pursued the even tenor of his way. As we have already said, the time was the same, the attitude was the same, the open window was the same. There was no precaution whatever to conceal the fact that he was going to pray, or to equivocate in the act when he was praying. He does not appear to have taken counsel of his friends, or to have summoned his servants, and charged them not to let any intruder come in. Neither did he adopt any measure to escape his enemies. Not one jot of anxiety did he betray. His faith was steadfast, his composure unruffled, his conduct simple and artless. Doubtless Daniel felt that as he was the greatest man in Persia, if he, a worshipper of Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, failed in any degree, he would set a bad example to others, and greatly discourage any poor Jew who might have grace enough to stand out, provided his example led the way. Persons who occupy high positions should know that God expects more of them than of other people. England expects every man to do his duty, but especially the men that are put to the front. If the standard-bearer fall, how is the battle to hold ? Now, Daniel, thou art much looked at and watched ; God has put thee in an eminent place ; therefore take care that thou dost not flinch one solitary jot : go and do as thou hast been wont, though the sky look overcast with clouds of evil omen. It would have been foolish daring rather than self-possessed courage in Daniel, had he been accustomed ordinarily to shut his window, should he have selected this crisis to open it ; and if he had been accustomed to pray twice a day, I do not see why he should go now and pray three times ; but he did as aforetime ; it was his habit, and he would not be put out of it. He would show that his conscience was obedient to God, and owed no allegiance to man. He could not and would not yield anything through menace. What a despot might lay down as law, a degraded sycophant might accept as equity ; but a just man is proof against the corruption of an unjust judge.

It might be asked, perhaps, "Should not Daniel obey the king ?" Certainly kings' laws are to be respected ; but any law of man that infringes the law of God is, *ipso facto*, null and void at once. It is the duty of every citizen to disregard every law of earth which is contrary to the law of heaven. So Daniel felt that whatever he owed to his temporal sovereign, he owed to his God a vast deal more. "But should not a man take care of his life ? Life is valuable ; should he run such

a risk?" Remember that if a man were to lose his soul, in order to save his life, he would make a wretched bargain. If a man lost his life to save his coat he would be a fool; and a man who loses his soul to save his life is equally a fool, and more so still. So Daniel felt that the risk of being put into a den with lions was nothing to the risk of being put into hell, and he chose the smaller risk, and in the name of God he went straight on. And I will tell you what Daniel would have said, if he lived in these days and had he been like some of my brethren—I mean like some of my brethren in the ministry—clergymen of a political church, by law established. He would have said, "This is not quite right! The decree of his Majesty's Privy Council is utterly at variance with my creed; but you see I occupy a position of great usefulness, and would you have me give up that position of usefulness that I hold, to let these governors and counsellors, that are all such bad fellows, have the entire management of the realm? Everything will go wrong if I do not compromise my profession. Although it perhaps may not be quite consistent with conscience, it is pardonable in the light of policy, and thirty days will soon pass away; so for the sake of your usefulness," he would have said to himself, "for the sake of your *usefulness*, you had better stop where you are." Oh, I have heard men who teach little children to repeat the words, "In my baptism I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," and who know that that is a lie, and yet stick in their un-protestant church, and say, "I remain here because of my usefulness,"—my *precious* usefulness!—"for if I were to go out of the church I should be leaving it to those bad persons who are in it." To know that as long as I am there, I am in complicity with men who are dragging back the church to Romanism, as fast as ever they can, and yet to say, "I am so useful, and I should injure my usefulness"! In the name of Almighty God, are we to do evil that good may come? If I thought I could save every soul in this place, or do any other stupendous thing by making the slightest compromise with my conscience, I dare not in the sight of the living God do it, for so have I not been taught by the Spirit of God. Consequences and usefulness are nothing to us: duty and right—these are to be our guides. These were Daniel's guides. The empire of Persia might go wrong; Daniel could not help that, he would not go wrong himself. It might be that these villanous courtiers and lords of the council might have the sway. Be it so. Leave God to manage them. It was not for Daniel even for thirty days to give up prayer. "Ah, but," they would say, "you can pray in your heart; you need not bow the knee; you can pray in your soul." But it will not do to sell principle, or to trifle with strict integrity and sterling truth in the least degree. Every jot and tittle has its intrinsic value. Our

bold Protestant forefathers were of a different breed from the present race of temporising professors. Talk ye of apostolic succession! By what strange process ye suppose that Fuller, Ridley, Latimer, Donne, and the like worthies, did transmit their mitres and their benefices to the craven seed who now hold their titles and enjoy their livings, we are at a loss to understand. The identification baffles us. Do they inherit the same spirit, defend the same doctrines, or observe uncompromising allegiance to the same gospel? We trow not. It seems to us that progenitors and progeny are wide apart as the poles. If Jesus Christ were here to-day, there are plenty of people who would sell him for two groats; they would not want thirty pieces of silver, but would sell him for a smile of patronage or a nod of approbation. Oh that we had back the old covenanters who would not swerve an inch! Look at John Bunyan when they bring him up before the magistrates and tell him he must not preach! "But I will preach," said he, "I will preach to-morrow by the help of God." "But you will be put in prison again." "Never mind, I will preach as soon as I get out." "But you will be hanged, or kept in prison all your life." "If I lie in prison," said he, "till the moss grows upon my eyelids, I can say nothing more than this, that with God's help, I will preach whenever I get a chance." Do not tell me that these are non-essentials. To men that will follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, even the opening or the shutting of a window, if need be, is essential. Be jealous over what are called "trifles." They may be mere straws, but they show which way the wind blows. We want the race of grand old bigots back again. We have been howling at bigots these many years and praising up universal "charity," which means nothing else than denying that there is any truth in the world to defend, or any army of saints in which to enlist. A Protestant on one occasion was bidden to bow down before the cross when he was about to be knighted, and many others did so. "It is only a form, you know," they said. "But," said he, "by God, I won't." And they called him "By God," and afterwards others who stood out boldly in the same way were called "By Gods," or "Bigots." So that tone of refusal has become a term of reproach. Here is a grandest bigot of all! Daniel is his name. He *will* pray. They will throw him into a lions' den. "The bigoted fool!" Ah, yes, but God did not discountenance his unswerving uprightness. He had said before his God that he would do the right, and the right thing he did, whatever might happen. Young men and young women, I would like you to go to school before Daniel and learn to say, "Whatever happens, we cannot lie, cannot do the wrong thing; we cannot believe what men teach us, when contrary to God's teaching; we cannot give up prayer and personal holiness, whether there be a lions' den or no lions' den. We will stand fast by that for God's own

sake." May that same spirit come back to Englishmen, and if it ever does, then I warrant you the shavelings of Rome will need to pack up and get straight away, for it is the bending men, the willow men, that will sell truth at any price. Oh that we may learn to sell it at no price, but to stand fast like pillars of iron for God, for Christ, for truth, for every holy thing!

Now I fear me I ought to say, before I leave this series of reflections, that there are some who have no decision of character at all, because they are not Christians. Some men are Christians, perhaps, though they have not decision enough to avow it—sneaking Christians! They have, they say, with their heart, but never with their mouth, confessed Christ. They have never been baptised as he bids them, and as they ought to be, according to his word. And there are some that have made a profession, but it is a smuggled profession. Their friends at home hardly know it, and they do not want them to know it. Oh, if I enlisted in Her Majesty's service, and had my regimentals given me to wear, I would wear them. I should not like to have them packed away and go about in other clothes, for I should be afraid of being taken up as a deserter. There are others who dishonour their profession, and do not live as they should. And there are those who, if they were persecuted, would speedily throw off their profession. They can go with Christ with silken slippers over smooth-shaven lawns, but as to walking through mire and mud with him, that they cannot do. Oh for the heart of a Daniel, every one of us, to follow Christ at all hazards.

IV. Our last point is DANIEL'S DELIVERANCE. With that we will conclude. The evil that threatened Daniel did come. He was to be put into a lions' den, and into a lions' den he was put. So, young man, you say, "I will not do wrong." You hope to escape unscathed. Yet it may be that you will be discarded by your friends, and discountenanced by your associates. Expect it, go through it. If you are a tradesman, and by saying you will not submit to an evil custom of the trade you will become a loser, be willing to be a loser; expect that the lions' den will be there, and that you will be put into it. Daniel came there, but there was not a scratch upon him when he came out of it. What a splendid night he must have spent with those lions! I do not wonder that in after days he saw visions of lions and wild beasts; it seems most natural that he should; and he must have been fitted by that night passed among these grim monsters to see grand sights. In any case he must have had a glorious night. What with the lions, and with angels all night to keep him company, he was spending the night-watches in grander style than Darius. And when he came out the next morning, so far from being a loser, he was a winner. The king approved him, admired him, loved him. Every-

body in the city had heard that Daniel had been put into the lions' den. He was a great man, and it was like putting the prime minister into the lions' den. And when he came out, with what awe they looked upon him! The king was not regarded as half so much a god as Daniel. Daniel had a smooth time of it afterwards. The counsellors never troubled him again; the lions had taken care of them. There would be no more plotting against him. Now he would mount to the highest place in the empire, and no man would dare to oppose him, for very dread of the same fate that had fallen upon his enemies and accusers. So Daniel had to the end of his days smooth sailing to the port of peace.

Now, believe me, to be decided for the right is not only the right thing but the easiest thing. It is wise policy as well as true probity. If you will not yield an inch, then somebody else must move out of the way. If you cannot comply with their proposals, then other people will have to rescind their resolutions. So you will find that, if you suffer, and perhaps suffer severely at first, for decision of character, you will get speedy recompense for all you endure, and a grand immunity in the future. There will be an end to the indignities that are offered you. If it be not obstinacy, but real conscience that prompts you, you will rise to a position which otherwise you could not have attained. The opposition so strong against you at first will very likely lead to your enemies endorsing your views, and the dishonour you have meekly to bear will be followed by a deference flattering to your vanity, if not perilous to your future consistency. Only put your foot down *now*, be firm and unfaltering *now*. If you yield to-day, you will have to yield more to-morrow. Give the world an inch, and it will take many an ell. Be resolved, therefore, that no inch you will give, that to the lions' den you would sooner go than there should be equivocation, prevarication, or anything approaching to falsehood. However great the difficulty may be at the outset, yet do it, and you will be unhurt: you will be an immediate gainer by it, and, to the rest of your days, God will give you a better and happier life than ever you have had before. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." You Christian soldiers in the barracks, be decided; stand up for Jesus. You will be ridiculed at first, but you will live that down before long. But if you are cowardly, the ridicule will last many and many a day, and your fellow-soldiers will take delight in laughing at you. If any of you are in a workshop, take courage, do not yield. Why should not we have our way, as they have theirs? Young men in business, take care how you begin your business in an honest, straightforward manner; for, if you begin it with artifice and crooked stratagem, it will go on crooked, and then, if you try to get straight, you will find it very difficult. But begin as

straight as a line, never swerve from it. Act on the outset as a Christian should. What if employers should frown, or customers be vexed, or friends fail? Bear it! It will be the best policy in the long run. That is not, however, for you to consider. Do the right thing, whatever happens. Let us be as Daniel. Oh that the young among you would emulate the purpose of heart with which Daniel began life! Oh that the active and vigorous among you would seek with Daniel's constant prayerfulness for that high gift of wisdom equal to all emergencies with which God so richly endowed him! And, oh, that the harassed, tempted, and persecuted among you would learn to keep a clean conscience in the midst of impurities, as Daniel did; to preserve, like him, faith and fellowship with the faithful and true God, though living among strangers and foreigners, profane in all their thoughts and habits; and to hold the statutes and commandments of the Lord as more to be desired than wealth or honour—yea, dearer to you, as Daniel accounted them, than even life itself! So shall you honour God, and glorify Christ, and bless and praise his precious name in a way in which nothing else but decision of character can possibly lead you to do. God grant us all to have Christ for a Saviour, and to live to his praise. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Daniel vi.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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THE CHARIOTS OF AMMI-NADIB.

A Sermon

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib."—
Solomon's Song vi. 12.

WE cannot be quite sure at this date what these chariots of Ammi-nadib were to which the inspired poet here refers. Some suppose that he may have alluded to a person of that name, who was renowned, like Jehu of old, for his furious driving. Hence it might have been familiar at the time, and afterwards have become proverbial to speak in metaphor of the chariots of Ammi-nadib. The conjecture seems harmless, still it is only a conjecture, and cannot be verified. It is quite possible, however, that our translators may have retained as a proper name a conjunction of two words, which, taken separately, are capable of being interpreted. You remember the word "Ammi" as it occurs in the prophet Hosea. "Say unto your brethren, *Ammi*," which signifies "ye are my people," even as before he had said, "Call his name *Lo-Ammi*, for ye are not my people." The one word Ammi, thus stands for "people," and the other word, "Nadib," means "willing," so that the two united may be rendered "willing people"—"like the chariots of a willing people." Or the words may be read, I think, more correctly, "The chariots of the princely people"—the princely chariots, the chariots of the prince. Some have understood them to mean the chariots of God, of the people that surround the Great Prince himself; that is to say, the chariots of the angels, according as we read, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." In this case, the figure would be a very striking one—"Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of the attendants upon the Great King. I was like the cherubim themselves, all aglow with consecrated fire." In whatever way the critical point is deciphered, the practical solution appears to be this. The writer's soul was quickened, because full of life, full of energy, full of might, full of spirit, and full of princely dignity too, and not only stimulated to a

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high degree, but also elevated, lifted up from dulness, indifference, and apathy—"Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib."

To whom does this text refer? Probably those of us who would never raise a doubt about the Song being a dialogue between Christ and the spouse—a matter we have no intention to canvass just now, as we take it for granted—might find no small difficulty in determining to which of the two sacred personages this speech belongs, whether it was to Solomon or to Shulamite (the masculine or the feminine variety of the same name)—the prince the husband, or the princess the spouse—whether, in a word, it was Christ or the church. There is very much to be said for its being Christ himself that is speaking. You will notice in this chapter that, from the fourth verse, he has been referring to his church. "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners. Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me," and so on. He is speaking of his church on to the tenth verse. "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" Then the eleventh verse proceeds, "I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded. Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib." May it not be the Lord himself who is speaking here? We may entertain the question for a moment without absolutely fixing upon this as its proper solution. If it refers to Christ, it means just this, that he had been for a while away from his people. They had grieved him, and he had hid his face from them. Out of very love and faithfulness he felt bound to chasten them, by hiding from them the brightness of his countenance. But he began to think tenderly of his people, his heart turned towards his church; and while he was thinking of her, he saw such beauties in her that his soul was melted with her charms. Oh, what an extraordinary thing that he should see loveliness in his poor imperfect church! But he saw such a loveliness about her, as her image rose up before his face that he said, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes." "Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me." And then, musing upon her still, and coming into her garden, and seeing the various graces like plants and flowers in their different stages of development, his heart began to grow warm again towards her and all that concerned her. It had never really been cold; it only seemed so in the deviation of his wonted manner, but, like Joseph before his brethren, he could not refrain any longer. When he saw some of his people budding with desires, others bursting into the realisation of those desires, when he saw some like ripe and mellow fruit upon the bough, ready for heaven, others just commencing the divine life, he was charmed to be in the garden of nuts; or ever he was aware, he found he must be with his people; he must return in the fulness of his love to his church. Not her beauties only, but the kindlings of his own soul began to stir him, his free grace sought free scope; his infinite love be-

came more than a match for the temporary prudence that had made him hide his face, and, swift as the chariots of Ammi-nadib, did he speed back to his people, to let them see him again, to let them enjoy fellowship again. There are other Scripture passages where the Saviour is spoken of as being like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel, or division, because he is so willing to come to his people, so willing to make matters up with them, and end the days wherein they mourn because the bridegroom is absent. When he has hidden his face for a while out of love for them, and out of desire to reveal to them their faults, I say again, he is so willing to blot out their faults once more, and to return to them again with mercies, that his return is compared for swiftness and irresistibleness to the motions of the chariots of Ammi-nadib.

It is a delightful thought that if communion between our souls and Jesus be suspended, it is not because he takes pleasure therein. His delights are with the sons of men. He a thousand times invites his chosen to abide in him, to continue in his love, and to remain in his company. In this Song he cries again and again, "Come with me, my spouse." This should encourage us to seek to him for renewed love-tokens, however serious may have been our departures from him, and however dark our prospects under the hidings of his face. If he who is the aggrieved party is eager to be reconciled, the matter is easy, and we may at once rise to the blessed condition from which our sin has cast us down. Jesus longs to embrace us, his arms are opened wide; do not our hearts warm at the sight? Do we not at once rush to his bosom, and find a new heaven, in a fresh sense of his boundless love? Wherefore hesitate? What possible cause can there be for abiding in darkness? Lord, we fall upon thy bosom and our joy returns.

Not that I intend to adopt that view as the groundwork of our present reflections. It appears to me that without in the slightest degree wresting the passage, or deviating from an honest interpretation, we may understand that this is the language of the church concerning Christ. If so, Christ's words conclude at the end of the tenth verse, and it is the church that speaks at the eleventh. There is not an instance in the whole Song, so far as I can remember, of the Prince himself speaking in the first person singular; either, therefore, this would be a solitary exception, or else, following the current plan, where the same pronoun is used, the church is speaking to Christ, and telling him of herself. "I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished and the pomegranates budded. Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib."

Taking the text, then, as referring to the church in particular, and more generally to the Lord's people, there will be *four observations* which we would pointedly make and prayerfully meditate. May God bless us now in fulfilling this purpose!

I. Our first observation shall be this. What is most wanted in all religious exercises is THE MOTION, THE EXERCISE OF THE SOUL. "Or ever I was aware, *my soul* made me"—or *my soul* became—"like the chariots of Ammi-nadib." Soul-worship is the soul of worship, and if you take away the soul from the worship, you have killed the worship; it becomes dead and barren henceforth. Let us turn over that well-

known thought. It may benefit us if we look at the many sides of it.

There are professors in this world who are perfectly content if they have gone through the mechanical part of public devotion. If they have occupied their seats, joined in the hymns and the prayers, and listened to the preaching, they go away quite content and easy. They would not like to be absent from the solemn assembly, and their conscience would prick them if they neglected the outward ordinances, but having gone through them, and complied with the wonted form, they are perfectly content with themselves, and think they have done that which is lawful and right, comely and excellent. Now, it is never with the child of God. If his soul be awakened from the torpor of death, and his sensibilities quickened into the vigour of life, he will feel that, unless in the song he has really praised God in strains of gratitude with emotions of thankfulness, he has rather mocked his heavenly Father than acceptably adored him. He knows that prayer, if it is not the soul that speaks with God, is but the carcase of prayer, destitute alike of the sweet savour which can find acceptance with God and of the sweet satisfaction that can bring refreshment to one's own breast. When he hears the word preached, he longs to feel it penetrate his heart, even as the rain soaks into the soil; and if he cannot so receive the truth of the gospel when it breaks on his ear as the engrafted word that saves his soul, and so feed upon it as the bread of life which nourishes his soul, he goes away sad at heart, deploring that, while others were feasting at the banquet, he was there without appetite, and had not the pleasure or the profit which they derived. Beloved, in our public services we ought to account nothing truly and rightly done which is not done with the heart. That is one reason why in this Tabernacle we have tried to lay aside everything of outward show or external form which might distract the thoughts or disturb the simplicity of waiting on the Lord. As far as I can, I try to avoid the use of all symbols except the two which Scripture has ordained, lest the symbol should tempt you to rest satisfied with itself, as I believe it generally does, and so prevent your reaching the Lord with your heart. We try to lay aside everything that would at all touch your senses in the worship, anything which appeals to the ear in the way of sweet music, anything of the æsthetic that would appeal to the eye. If you do not worship God with your souls, I hope you will get tired of our fellowship. Yet, be it confessed, I painfully feel that it is almost as easy not to worship God with the bald plainness of Quakerism as it is not to worship God with the studied pomp of Ritualism. In any form, or without any form of worship, the amount of real devotion must be measured by the quantity of soul that is in it, provided the quality be pure, sincere, guileless. If the soul be there, in the full exercise of its powers and passions, knowing what is revealed and feeling what is inspired, I believe God is gracious to pity and forgive a thousand mistakes in outward fashion and skill of execution. The preacher's modulation may be faulty, and the people's singing may be ill-timed and barbarous tunes, without peril of the unpardonable sin. But if the soul be lacking, though ye should have essayed to worship according to the pattern given in the Mount, and have never had a word uttered

or a sound made but such as in itself would be accredited by men and acceptable with God had it been quickened by the Spirit, yet without that divine Spirit which alone can give force and fervour to the human soul, it is all null and void. I think every genuine Christian knows it is so, and feels it is so. He says, "My heart crieth out for God, for the living God," nor can he be satisfied unless he does find God, and draws near before him.

As in public worship, it is precisely the same in our own private and personal transactions with the Most High. The religious worldling will say a prayer when he wakes in the morning, and perhaps, unless he is out late, or too sleepy at home, he will have a bit of prayer at night again, in the way of the repetition of some collect, or something which he has learnt by rote. And very likely he has family prayer too. It is not so much a custom as it was, but there are some who think they cannot go through the day unless they have what they call "Prayers." But mark how the Christian prizes private prayers above everything that has to do with the ordering of his daily habits. And see how he esteems family prayer to be a necessity of every Christian household! At the same time he is not content because he prays for a few minutes unless he draws near to the Lord; he is not satisfied because he gathered his children together, and read the Scriptures and prayed with them, if, on adding up the sum total of the day, he is compelled to say, "It was heartless worship. When I awoke it was heartless worship, when I gathered my children and my servants it was the same, and it was sleepy, heartless worship when I knelt by my bed-side and professed to seek the Lord at nightfall." If it is heartless it is unacceptable; God cannot receive it. If we have not thrown our heart into it, depend upon it God will never take it to his heart and be pleased with it. Only that prayer which comes from our heart can get to God's heart; if we pray only from the lips, or from the throat, and not low down from the very bowels of our nature, we shall never reach the bowels of our Father who is in heaven. Oh, that we may be more and more scrupulous and watchful in these things! In the diary of Oliver Heywood, one of the ejected ministers, he often says, "God helped me in prayer in my chamber and in the family." And once he writes thus—"In my chamber this morning I met with more than ordinary incomings of grace and outgoings of heart to God." I am afraid we may get satisfied with ourselves, especially if we are regular in private Scripture reading, private prayer, family prayer, and public prayer, while instead of being satisfied with these exercises we ought to be weeping over them and deploring the formal and heartless manner in which we are prone to discharge them. Be it always recollected that we do not pray at all, unless the soul is drawn out in pleading and beseeching the Lord. *Si nil curarem, nil orarem*, said Melancthon, "Were I without cares, I should be without prayers." Now, perhaps you may know a friend of yours who thinks himself a poet. He can make poetry at any time, all the year round. Just pull him by the sleeve, and he will make you very soon a verse or two at the spur of the moment to show the readiness of his wit and the versatility of his talent. Yet I dare say you think that he is about as far off from being a poet as a sparrow is from being an eagle. You know if he were a

poet he would not be able to command the glow of imagination at time, and at another time he would hardly be able to control it. He would sometimes have a divine afflatus upon him, as some call it, and then noble thoughts in appropriate words would flow from his pen. Otherwise he would be just as dull and insipid as ordinary mortals. He would be so indignant that he could not write verses to order like those who scribble rhyme to advertise a tailor's wares. Without the inspiration comes upon me, he would say, I cannot compose a line. In like manner a man cannot always pray, and the man who pretends he can doth only utter jargon. He never prays at all, as the other never makes poetry at all. Prayer is a divine art. It is a thing which needs the inspiration not of the muses, but of the Spirit of God himself, and it is when the Spirit comes upon us with divine force, and makes our soul like the chariots of Ammi-nadib that we can pray; and at other times when that Spirit is not with us, we cannot pray as we did before. Every living child of God knows this. We must measure our prayers by the state of soul that we were in.

Take another illustration from the painter. One person who thinks himself a painter can paint any day you like anything you ask him—mountain, a river, a horse, an insect, or a flower—it is all the same to him. He takes a brush and soon produces something, which ordinary people might think to be a picture; but send that daub off to the Royal Academy, and they will tell you that it may do for a table-tray, but not for the walls of a gallery. But the man that *can* paint, how does he mix his colours? The great painter will tell you that he mixes his brains with his colours; and when he takes his brush and dips it into the paint, he lays it on with his soul. In a great picture such as sometimes we have seen by a Titians, or a Raphael, it is not the colour but the man's heart that has got out on to the canvas. So how he has managed to drop his brush into his soul. That is real painting. And so it is with prayer. The humblest man that prays to God with his soul understands the fine art of prayer; but the man who chants a pompous liturgy, or repeats an extemporaneous effusion, has not prayed. He has dashed off what he thinks to be a picture, but it is not a picture, it is not a prayer. Had it been a prayer it would have had a palpable inspiration in its light and shade. A painting may consist of few lines, but you will see the painter's hand in it; and prayer may consist of only half a dozen words, but you can see the hand of God in it. The formality repels you in the one case; the vitality attracts you in the other.

So we will come back to the proposition with which we started. We can only pray according to the proportion in which our soul puts forth its force and feeling, and it is the same with praise. We have praised God up to the amount of soul that was in the sense as well as in the sound, be it with an organ or without an organ, with good music or with groanings that cannot be uttered. We may have praised God either way, but only if our soul has been in full swell. With every kind of religious exercise, the soul is the standard of the whole company of worship.

II. We proceed to a second remark. SOMETIMES IT HAPPENS THAT THE HEART IS NOT IN THE BEST STATE FOR DEVOTION. If religi

be a matter of soul, it cannot always be attended to with equal pleasure and advantage. You can always grind a barrel-organ ; it will invariably give you the same discordant noise, which people call music, but the human voice will not admit of being wound up in the same fashion, nor will it for the most part discharge the same monotonous functions. The great singer finds that his voice changes, and that he cannot always use it with the same freedom. If the voice is a delicate organ, how much more delicate is the soul ! The soul is continually the subject of changes. Ah, how often it changes because of its contact with the body ! If we could be disembodied, oh, how we would praise God and pray to him ! "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak." I sat among some brethren the other day who were devout, and I tried to be, but I had a splitting headache. I do not know whether you could pray under so grievous a disability ; let me confess to you that I could not. At another time, not long ago, I was one of a solemn assembly, when various disturbances occurred in the room—somebody getting up, and others coming in late, as some of you do—and I could not get into a right frame as I ought to have done. Little things will affect little minds, and our minds, many of them, are little. In that case I could not pray, because my mind was being distracted and my attention was being taken away. Such distractions frequently happen, and bitterly they remind us of our infirmities. The apostles themselves fell to sleeping when they ought to have been praying ; and under Paul's preachings Eutychus went to sleep, and Paul never blamed him. He died as the result of it, but he got raised again from the dead, so I suppose there was no fault in him. We may sometimes, without any wilfulness on our part, as a necessary result of the weakness of our nature, or the stress of our toil and care, have brought ourselves into a condition in which we cannot feel like the chariots of Ammi-nadib, and it is no use for us to attempt it. The body does affect the soul materially ; and a thousand outside agencies will tell upon our mental susceptibilities. I have known persons come into this Tabernacle who have, perhaps, been annoyed with somebody in their pew, or somebody outside. It ought not to be so, but it is so. A little fly buzzing about one's face, as small a thing as that, will disturb one's devotion, so that you cannot pray as you would and as you desire.

And then, alas, our sins are a much more serious hindrance to our devotion. A sense of guilt puts us into such a state that we cannot be bold in our faith and childlike in our confidence when we appear before God. Perhaps we have been angry. How can we come before the Lord calmly when our spirit has been just now tossed with tempest ? Probably we have been seeking the world, and going after it with all our might. How can we suddenly pull up, and put all our strength into a vigorous seeking of the kingdom of God and his righteousness in a moment ? It is possible, too, that there is a sick child at home, or a wife lying suffering, or serious losses and crosses about business and domestic affairs. Perhaps one has a very heavy heart to bring before the Lord. Now God's grace can help us to overcome all these things, and can even make our souls like the chariots of Ammi-nadib. We do want grace for such emergencies. The soul, in its different phases and states, has need of help from the sanctuary

to which it repairs. "Well," perhaps one here will say, "I always do what I think right every Sunday in much the same manner. I always pray the same, and I don't know but what I can always sing God's praises the same." Yes, let me answer our good friend, I have no doubt of your thorough sameness, or of your habitual self-content. If you were to ask one of the statues in St. Paul's Cathedral how it felt, I have no doubt it would say that it always felt the same, because it never had any feeling. Appeal to anything destitute of life, you will find that it has no change. But where there is life, and that which is intensely delicate—spiritual life, and where it is placed in circumstances so hostile to it as the circumstances which surround us here, you will find that not only the revolutions of the seasons, but the variations of the temperature, affect it. And every man who has this life in him experiences such changes. We have read of those who have no changes, and therefore they fear not God. The fact that a believer cannot at all times draw nigh to God as his spirit would desire, becomes accordingly the key which interprets to him the grace and goodness whereby he sometimes gains access after a manner that surprises and delights his spirit.

III. This leads cheerfully up to our third observation, **THERE ARE MEANONS WHEN OUR HEART IS SWEETLY MOVED TOWARDS GOD.** "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib." Have ye not proved welcome opportunities when all your thoughts have been quickened, enlivened, and stimulated to activity in the highest degree about your highest interests? We have ceased to moan—

"Our souls, how heavily they go
To reach eternal joys;"

and we have been all wings, and could soar and mount aloft. Like David, we could have danced before the ark of God for very joy, and if any had said to us that we might ourselves fall by our enthusiasm while we seemed vile by our hilarity, we should have replied that we purposed to be viler still. All within us was awake; there was not a slumbering faculty. Our memory told us of the goodness of the Lord in days gone by; and our hopes were regaled by the mercy which we had not tasted yet, but which was made sure to us by promise, and brought near to us by faith. Our faith was active and bright of eye. Our love especially shed a clear light over all our prospects. Oh, we have had blessed times, when our soul has been light and rapid as the chariots of Ammi-nadib! And at such times we were conscious of great elevation. The chariots of Ammi-nadib were those of a prince. And oh, we were no more mean, and low, and beggarly, and grovelling, but we saw Christ, and were made kings and princes and priests with him. Then we longed to crown his head. Then we could have performed martyrs' deeds. Then we were no cowards, we were afraid of no foes, we sat down at the feet of Jesus, and thought everything little compared with him; sufferings for his sake would have been a gain, and reproach would have been an honour. We had princely thoughts then, large, liberal, generous, capacious thoughts concerning Christ and his people, his cause, and his con-

quests: our souls were like the chariots of Ammi-nadib. At the same time they were full of power; for, when the chariots of Ammi-nadib went forth, who could stop them? Who could lay his hand upon the reins and turn the coursers as they went onward in their mighty tramping? Such was our spirit. We laughed at thoughts of death, and poured contempt upon the trials of life. We were "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." Oh, what splendid times we have had when God has been with us. Do you remember when you had them? I recollect, when newly converted, how full my spirit was of love and holy triumph, like the chariots of Ammi-nadib. Yours, no doubt, were much like mine. The love of your espousals was upon you. With what pleasing rapture you embraced your Lord and said, "I will never let him go." Stronger is love than death or hell. You felt it to be so. You flamed and burned and glowed, and though in yourself you were like low brushwood, yet you were like the bush in the desert, that burned with fire because God was in your soul. Do you remember that? Well, now, since then, in private prayer sometimes, you have had gracious access, and meditation has been added to prayer, and the love of Christ has come in upon you like a great flood tide, and drowned everything in your soul except itself. There have been periods when a sense of the eternal, immutable, never-ending love of God, his electing sovereign favour, that, love of God, the love of God in giving his Son for you, have told upon your spirit with a mighty influence that has laid you prostrate for very joy, when you could not speak, because words were too poor to express the emotions of your soul. You had to feel the force of James Thomson's hymn of the seasons: "Come, then, expressive silence, muse his praise," for you could not speak it. You know it has been so with you sometimes, and has not it been so sometimes under the word, when you have been ready to stand up and clap your hands for joy? Have not I seen gratitude and exultation reflected on your faces sometimes when the Lord has been present in the preaching of the gospel, and the truth has come to you like marrow and fatness from the King's own hands, till Dr. Watts has proved to be a faithful interpreter of the very scene and circumstance that ravished your heart—

"The King himself draws near,
And feasts his saints to-day;
Here we may sit, and see him here,
And love, and praise, and pray."

Oh, yes! in God's house you have known the days of heaven upon earth. Might I speak for the rest of you I should pronounce the choicest periods of fellowship those we have found at the Lord's table. When the bread has been broken and the wine poured out down in the the Lecture Hall, he has been with us in the breaking of bread. If ever we have come near to Christ, surely it has been in that blessed communion. There are the windows of agate and the gates of carbuncle through which Christ comes to his people in the ordinances he has ordained. We will never slight them. We cannot. The Master puts such reality and fulness of joy into them. Apart from him they are idols; but with him, when he is there, when we have the *real presence*—

not the superstitious presence some speak about, but the *real* presence which his own Spirit imparts, and our waiting souls participate,—ah, then we have said—

“No beams of cedar or of fir
Can with his courts on earth compare,
As myrrh new bleeding from the tree,
Such is a dying Christ to me.”

Not unfrequently too have I known that the Lord has appeared to his people and warmed their hearts when they have been working for him. Some idle, indolent, sluggish professors who have used the ordinances have not found benefit in the ordinances, because the Lord has intended to rebuke their sloth; but when they have got up and gone forth among the poor, when they have gone forth to visit the sick, the sorrowful, and the dying, they have heard such delightful expressions from the lips of holy, suffering men and women, or felt their hearts so kindled by a sight of divine compassion in the midst of desperate poverty and gracious pardon for grievous sin, that a quickening has come over them; and whereas they did not seem to care before whether souls were lost or saved, they have gone out into the world with zeal to win fresh trophies for the Messiah, their hearts being like the chariots of Ammi-nadib, through the benefits they have received from Christian service. A great many Christian people never will be happy, and never fully alive to the destinies that wait on their Redeemer, till they get something to do to give them an interest in those mighty issues. The rule of the Christian life is, “If any man will not work, neither shall he eat.” If you will not serve God as Christians, you shall not feed upon the sweet things of the kingdom to your own soul’s comfort. A little more service, and your soul would become like the chariots of Ammi-nadib. Beloved, there is no need that I should enlarge; I merely say this to bring up your grateful memories that you may thank God for what he has done, for remember whatever he has done in the past he will do again in the future. When the Lord has come once to his people he says, “I will see you again, I will come to you again, and your hearts shall rejoice.” Of everything he has ever given you, he has got as much in store, and he is quite as able to give it to you now as he was before. You have never gone so high in joy but you may go higher yet; you have never drunk such draughts from the well of Bethlehem as left the well empty; you shall drink again of it. Do not say, “I had those sweet times when I was young, I shall never have them again.” You shall have precious times again. Get back to your first love, dear brother, dear sister; get forward to a higher love than ever you had, for God will help you. Say you, “I look back and think—

‘What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.’”

Thank God for that ache. Bless God for the aching void. If your soul aches for God, he will be to your relief ere long. Whenever a soul puts up a flag of distress at the mast-head, he may be sure that

Christ is on the look-out for just such a soul. He has thrown up the windows of heaven, and wherever he sees a soul that does what is right and longs to find joy and reconciliation with God, he will come to it, and before long it shall be better for you than even the chariots of Ammi-nadib, and more desirable.

IV. Our last observation is this—SOMETIMES THE SWEET SEASONS COME TO US WHEN WE DO NOT EXPECT THEM. "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib." Some poor hearts do not reckon ever to have these joys again. They say, "No, no, they are all gone; the last leaf has blown from the tree; the last flower has faded in the garden. My summer is past. It is all over with me!" That is the bitter complaint and the hollow murmuring of unbelief. But the Lord for whom ye wait can suddenly appear, and while you are saying hard things of yourself he can refute them with the beams of his countenance. Even at this very moment you may stand like Hannah, a woman of sorrowful spirit, feeling as if you would be sent away empty; yea, and God's servant himself may address you with rough words as Eli did her, and may even tell you that you are drunken, when it is deep grief that enfeebles your steps and chokes your voice; and all the while the Lord may have in store for you such a blessing as you have never dreamed of; and he may say to thee, "Go thy way, my daughter; I have heard thy petition, thy soul shall have its desire." Or ever I was aware, while my unbelief led me to think such a thing impossible, thou hast made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.

"Or ever I was aware," as if it came upon me almost without my own consent. Glad enough I was when it did come, but it took me by surprise; it led me captive. Now, is not that the way that the Lord dealt with you when you were not aware of it, when you had no reason to expect him, when you found and felt yourself to be utterly lost, ruined, and undone? Did he not surprise you with his mercy, and prevent you with his lovingkindness? Again, you are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. There is nothing that leads you to expect a season of joy; you are just as empty and unworthy as you can well be; you feel as if your heart were of stone, and you cannot stir it, and you are saying, "I only wish I could enjoy the freedom that my companions have, and keep the solemn feasts with their holy gladness: but alas for me! I am afraid I have got to be a mere mechanical Christian, without the lively instincts and lofty inspirations of spiritual worship." Thus are you writing bitter things against yourself. Oh, beloved, the Lord is looking down upon you now as his son or daughter, as his own dear child, and is about to surprise you with his infinite love! Let me give you one text to put into your mouth and take home with you. The Lord has said, concerning every one of his people, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." "Why, now, I am all covered over with spots and blemishes," you say, "and no beauty;" but the Lord Jesus Christ has washed you with his blood, and covered you with his righteousness. Do you think he can see any imperfection in that? You are members of his body, united to him. In Christ you are without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. You are all spots in yourself, but he sees you as he intends to make you before he has done with

you, and he can discern unspeakable beauties in you. "Oh," say you, "does he think that? Surely then I see unspeakable beauties in him! His love to me opens my eyes to see how dear an one he must be. Is he enamoured of me? Has he given his whole heart to me? Did he prove his love to me by bleeding on the cross? Oh, then, I must love him, if he will but let me! Shall such a poor worm as I am love infinite perfection? Oh, yes, I must, since infinite perfection deigns to love me, and since the Sun of Righteousness in all his glory deigns to shine on my soul!" You are beginning to warm already, I see you are. Or ever you are aware, your soul is making you like the chariots of Ammi-nadib. And if you keep on with those holy contemplations, you will leave off all misgivings about your love to him, so deeply absorbed will you be in musing on his love to you. You will forget all the while about your sin, while you recollect the blood that has put that sin away, the perfect righteousness that has made you accepted in the Beloved, and the everlasting covenant which through grace has put your feet upon a rock, and saved your eyes from tears and your feet from falling. Engaged in such sweet soliloquies, or ever you are aware, your soul will make you like the chariots of Ammi-nadib. The Lord make it so!

God grant that surprising grace may come likewise even to sinners, and lead them to Jesus, and constrain them to look to Jesus. Then, while looking, faith will breathe in their spirit, so that they will sing—

"Thy mercy is more than a match for my heart,
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;
Dissolved by thy goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the glory I've found."

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RUBBISH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"There is much rubbish ; so that we are not able to build the wall."—Nehemiah, iv. 10.

REMEMBER that Jerusalem had been totally destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar ; and what destruction by the Babylonians meant may be inferred from the vast heaps of the dust of powdered bricks and charred wood which have been discovered upon the sites of cities which were utterly razed to the ground by the fierce soldiery of the terrible king. The ruins are frequently so complete that even tradition has forgotten the name of the mound or heap which is the sole memorial to mark the sepulchre of a queenly city. The Babylonians made sure work when they did it, their ploughers made deep furrows, and their destroyers cried one to another, "Overturn, overturn, overturn, till not a stone shall abide in its place." They reaped a nation with their swords as corn is cut down by the sickle, and they beat their cities till the ruins thereof were small as the dust of the summer threshing-floor. Do you wonder that on the site of Jerusalem there remained much rubbish ? Many modern destroyers have done their desolating work most wonderfully, and I may venture to quote what I have seen of their doings as an example of the much rubbish with which the foundations of a ruined city are sure to be covered. I have stood upon the Palatine Mount in Rome, where formerly the palaces of the Cæsars raised themselves in more than imperial grandeur. But what an Alp of fragments ! What a mountain of broken walls and columns, and stones peering upward like the natural rock of mother earth ! Houses, convents, palaces, have been built upon the mass, and for many seasons trees have bloomed and fruited, and gardens have brought forth their harvests above the spot where once the imperial tyrant was wont to awe the nations with a nod. To restore the palaces of the Palatine, the first labour would be the unearthing of the foundations, and this would probably be as huge

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an undertaking as the rebuilding of the palaces themselves. A mountain must be carried away ere a stone can be laid. If you were able to visit the Forum at Rome, you would see, if you were there to-day, numbers of labourers with horses and carts continually at work taking away hundreds of thousands of tons of rubbish, which have covered up all that still remains of the ancient centre and heart of Rome; so that Jerusalem, I do not doubt, was one vast heap, made up of the *débris* of its houses, of the tower and armoury of David, of the palace of the king, and of the temple itself; and though now, at the period we are about to speak of, the temple had been rebuilt, and modern houses covered the site of the older Jerusalem, yet, when they came to the wall of the city, with the view of thoroughly restoring it, they found it a complete ruin, and such a ruin that the mass which covered it up it was difficult to dig through. They could not build the wall, because there was so much rubbish.

Now, this, it seems to me, is intended, or at least may justifiably be used, for a type of the work which God's people have to carry on in the name of Jesus, and in the power of his Spirit, in the world. We have to build the wall of the church for God, but we cannot build it, for there is so much rubbish in our way. This is true, first, *of the building of the church, which is the Jerusalem of God*; and this is equally true *of the temple of God, which is to be built in each one of our hearts*. Full often we feel discouraged. Though we hear the voice that saith, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God," still we are apt to feel that we cannot build this wall, because there is so much rubbish.

I. I shall speak first, then, of the great work comprised in **THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH**.

Now, this enterprise is the work of God. He alone can build the church. "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory," and we may build as we may, but "except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." Still, our full and firm conviction that it is God's working does not at all interfere with the grand truth that he employs agents for the building up of his church in the world; that, in fact, he has commissioned us, his chosen servants, and sent us into the world, each one according to our ability and opportunity, to labour for him. We work because God works by us. We are hindered, however, in this service by the fact that there is much rubbish in the way. It always was so. When Paul began to build for God, and the apostles went forth as wise master-builders, there lay before them in towering heaps the old Jewish rubbish, hard to remove, heavy to bear away, and in quantity equal to a huge hill. The foundation was there; thank God we have not to lay that; that is laid in Christ Jesus, and firmly laid, and "other foundation can no man lay"; but the Jews, with their traditions, had overlaid the foundations; they had added to the word of God, they had put glosses upon it, they had taken away its real meaning, and put to it a meaning of their own. They had invented rites and ceremonies innumerable, and traditions of the fathers dark and mysterious, so that though a man should seek to find out the truth, he could not by reason of the

abundance of the confused material and traditional superstition with which they had covered it up. The apostles had to begin their gospel labour amongst their fellow-countrymen in the midst of this much rubbish. No sooner did they begin to remove the worthless deposits than the lovers of tradition assailed them, raised a great dust, and became their violent persecutors, following them from city to city, scandalising them, and committing all manner of violence against them. You cannot remove ruins without arousing the owls and bats. The most rotten rubbish upon earth is sure to find some defender. By this rubbish many have gained their wealth, and they are full of wrath if any threaten to disturb it. The apostles soon found that they had fallen upon troublous times, yet by God's help they cleared away that rubbish, and were enabled to build their wall, till the New Jerusalem became famous in the earth.

They encountered in the wider world of the Roman empire the rubbish of old paganism; and oh, what rubbish that was! He who is acquainted with the classic writers knows how polluted were the people of their times. Their satirists ascribe to them mirthfully vices which even with tears we would not dare to mention. The superstitions of the age were grovelling to a hideous degree; their very gods were monsters of crime, and their sacred rites orgies of lust and drunkenness. The priests had successfully endeavoured to make vice into a religion, and under the pretence of mysterious worship had devised means for pandering to the basest passions of the most corrupt human nature. It is no small mass of rubbish which the student of to-day sifts over as he makes researches into the Greek and Roman mythology. Men could not find out God, for gods many and lords many stood in the way. Neither could they believe in the simplicity of Jesus Christ, because their foolish heart was darkened. "God made man upright, but he hath found out many inventions;" and all these inventions helped to turn him from his uprightness, and to pervert his judgment. Yet those who went before us laboured on amidst that foul and noisome rubbish, and were so successful in their earnest excavations, that at this day no one thinks of worshipping Jupiter, or Saturn, or Venus, or Mercury; these demon-deities have gone to the limbo from whence they came. They have been smitten—smitten by the gospel, and they have withered like grass, so that no man boweth himself before them any more. The God of truth has come, and these bats and owls of the night have betaken themselves into obscurity and oblivion. This rubbish was cleared away, and the foundations were built upon by earnest men that went before us, though they had to lay each stone in martyr blood, and cement it with agonies and tears.

Moreover, remember that in those early days the church in her building had to encounter the very much rubbish of the various philosophies of mankind. There was a kind of "feeling after God" in the heathen mind; but this feeling after God was misdirected and proudly self-confident, and therefore it missed its way, and in the process of thought the more spiritual-minded amongst men (if I may venture to call men spiritual at all who were not renewed by grace) invented theories and imaginings, which they thought to be exceeding

wise, but which in fact were folly itself dressed out in the robes of vainglory. These philosophies had a great following, and exercised so subtle and powerful an influence that they were felt even in the church itself. In the writings of the apostles Paul and John you continually meet with allusions to the great Gnostic philosophy which perverted so many Christians. Ever since that day human wisdom has been a greater curse to the church than anything else. The ignorance of Christians has never been so evil a thing, bad as it is, as the vain knowledge, the false wisdom, with which men have been puffed up in their fleshly minds. It is an ill day when men know too much to know Christ. It is a great misfortune when men are too manly to be converted and to become as little children, and sit at the feet of the great Teacher: yet there are many professors of religion who talk as if this was their condition, and as if they were proud of it. Even at this present time the outside philosophies of unchristian men infect the church, spoil her, injure her, dilute the wine of the kingdom, overturn the children's milk, and to a great extent poison the bread of life. Sad that it should be so, but the rubbish of philosophy has always been in the way of the building up of the wall of the church of God, and the story of the apostolical age may serve as a great comfort to us in these evil times. As they were hindered so are we, but as they persevered and overcame even so will we, by our great Master's aid.

After that lot of rubbish had been cleared away, the task was only begun, for soon after apostolic times, and the first zeal of Christians had gone, there came the old Roman rubbish, which in the end proved a worse hindrance than all which had preceded it. This Popish rubbish was found in layers—first one doctrinal error, and then another, and then another, and then another, and then another, till at this time the errors of the Church of Rome are as countless as the stars, as black as midnight, and as foul as hell. Her abominations reek in the nostrils of all good men. Her idolatries are the scorn of reason and the abhorrence of faith. The iniquities of her practice, and the enormities of her doctrine, almost surpass belief. Popery is as much the masterpiece of Satan as the gospel is the masterpiece of God. There can scarcely be imagined anything of devilish craftiness or Satanic wickedness which could be compared with her, she is unparalleled, the queen of iniquity. Behold upon her forehead the name, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. The church of Rome and her teachings are a vast mountain of rubbish covering the truth. For weary years good men could not get at the foundation because of this very much rubbish. Here and there a Wicliffe spied out the precious cornerstone, and leaped for joy because he could get his foot upon it, and say, "Jesus Christ himself, elect and precious, is the stone on which I build my hope." Here and there a John Huss, or a Jerome of Prague, or a Savonarola, in the thick midnight, yet nevertheless found out the foundation, and wept their very hearts out because of the much rubbish which threatened to bury even them while they were seeking the foundation. A master excavator was Martin Luther; how grandly he laid bare the glorious foundation of justification by faith alone! An

equally grand worker at this great enterprise was Master John Calvin, who laid open long stretches of the ancient foundations of the covenant of grace. Well was he supported by his brother of Zurich, Zwingle, and John Knox in Scotland, and others in this land. They cleared away for a while some of the rubbish, but there was such a mass of it that they had to throw it up in heaps on either side, and it is beginning to come crumbling down again on to the foundation, and to cover it up once more. A perfect reformation they could not work, and the remnant of the rubbish is now our plague and hindrance. Everywhere the much rubbish is being diligently cast upon the wall by the emissaries of the evil one, and we can scarcely get to the foundations to build thereon the gold and silver and precious stones which God commits to us with which to build up his own house. Alas, there is very, very much rubbish. I saw in Rome that the waggon which took away the earth from the Forum were marked "Regia Scava." They belonged to the royal excavations; and I long to see royal excavators, employed by the King of Kings, get to work to excavate again the foundations of the wall of Jerusalem, and cart away some of the tremendous heaps of rubbish that still lie upon the walls. God grant we may see good and great work done in this direction before long.

But, beloved friends, if all this rabbinical, and pagan, and philosophical, and Romish rubbish were all gone, still the work would scarcely have begun, for there is yet very much rubbish of other kinds lying hereabout. There is much rubbish arising from the world, the flesh, and the devil, so that we are not able to build the wall. Look at human sin, how that impedes us! Oh, if there were no false systems of religion, if priest and scribe were silent, if false prophet and Antichrist were both out of the way, yet the sins of men are a vast and hideous mass of rotten rubbish, and our labours of love are hindered thereby. How hard it is to get at human ears, for the world has the first word, and often the last word, with the most of men. Eargate is choked with rubbish. How harder still it is to get at human hearts, for there Satan reigns as in his own palace, and takes care to erect huge barricades and earthworks of the rubbish of carnal lust and pride and unbelief. Men are wrapped up in indifference to eternal things, like mummies in their bands and gums. They give all their energy to the answering of the question "What shall we eat and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Immortal as they are, they live only for mortality. Though their grandest destiny lies in eternity, yet all their efforts are bounded by the narrow space of time. Charm, O thou charmer, never so wisely, but this adder hath no ear for thee. This people, bent on its lusts, will still follow its own devices. Though Christ beckon with his pierced hand, yet turn they their back on him; and even he from Calvary cries:—

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by,
Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?"

He is despised and rejected of men; they see no form nor comeliness in him whose countenance contains within itself all celestial beauty. They cannot be got at by love or law, by tears or terrors, by prayers or preachings; they are so absorbed in earthly things. We cannot

build the wall for their much rubbish. They are wedded to their sins; they cling to their idols; they will not even think upon their soul, and their God, and their Saviour; they choose their own delusions and reject their own mercies, and it seems as if everything in the world helped them this way, for the business of life, the care and the ease, the quiet and the noise, the tumult and the turmoil thereof alike ensnare them; all these things are transformed by their alienated hearts into a mass of rubbish. With one man it is the pursuit, the arduous pursuit of learning, with another an intense greed for gold, with a third ambition, with a fourth the lust of pleasure; but in each man the heap of rubbish prevents our getting at the heart. We cannot build the wall. Who among us has not often gone back to his God, and said, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" And this age of competition seems to make the thing worse than ever. Some are so poor that they tell us they cannot listen, for they have to work and toil like slaves for their bread merely to keep body and soul together; and as for those who are rich—O God, help the rich! Still is it true, and perhaps truer now than ever, that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God;" for the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches are a mass of rubbish, so that we cannot build the wall.

Oh, how sad is the retrospect of the pastor as he remembers the many in whom he could never reach the conscience, because of the intervening rubbish, and how mournful is the prospect that lies before him! Our only consolation is that, if *we* cannot build, there is One who can; and if the rubbish be so much that the strength of the bearers of burdens is decaying, yet there is a strength which is not decayed, there is an arm which is not weary, and can perform all that is needed.

I am afraid, dear brethren, that in the work of building up the church the rubbish does not lie all with the sinners, but there is much of it also with the saints. There is very much rubbish among professors, so that we cannot build the wall. I would be very patient with all men, for I need much patience toward myself, but there are far too many dear brethren in Christ who seem to me to spend all their time in diligently doing nothing. I have heard of a man who had, by dint of great patience and much skill, after many days of work, very splendidly carved the image of Cæsar on a cherry-stone. What a splendid result to have achieved! The exploit was duly reported and chronicled. But what of it? Truly, I have read books which seemed to me to be elaborately learned about nothing of any practical value, and to amount to about as much as a carving on a cherry-stone, and no more. What good was to come of it I am sure I could not tell. Brethren come out every now and then in the religious world so splendidly with some new fad and fancy of theirs, some grand discovery that they have made, some wonderful point of doctrine, some marvellous soul-stirring discovery, as it seems to be to them; and all the world is to stand still, and all the churches to be broken up, and I don't know what, until they have exhibited this precious thing, which when you have carefully looked at it, turns out to be very like the mouse which was the famous product of the labour of the mountain. It comes

to nothing more. There is very much rubbish about, brethren ; and, therefore, for the present distress, if every Christian minister were to keep to preaching Christ and him crucified, and nothing else, I think he would do well ; and if every Christian man were to just keep to the plain truths of Scripture, and have them worked into his own soul by the Holy Spirit, and then speak them out with power, and live for soul-winning, and care for nothing else, he would do well. But there is very much rubbish. A whole evening will be spent by brethren in discussing a question just about as valuable as the famous inquiry of the schoolmen, as to how many angels would be able to stand on the point of a single needle. After discussing it with some little temper, perhaps, and having prayed over it a good deal, too—though I wonder how they dare do so—the whole of it ends in a bag of wind or a bottle of smoke, and nothing else. Had that same time been spent in the visitation of the sick, and reclaiming the Arabs of our streets, the lifting up of the ruffianism and the blackguardism of London into something like decency, morality, and Christianity, it might have been much better. But there is very much rubbish, and I am very much afraid we all of us contribute to that rubbish heap a little. We have all some favourite notion, some conceit, some invention of our own, some addition to the Word, some subtraction from it, some impossible theory, some dogma or doctrine rather of our own inventing than of Bible teaching, and so there is very much rubbish, so that we cannot build the wall. Does not one feel inclined, full often, to say, “Oh, how I wish I could get at it—really get at it—get to doing something for God, and Christ, and the souls of men.” Just let the dust cart come and clear the way. These very excellent works upon futurity, and profound books upon nothing—yet, let them go, beautifully written as they are, and let us plunge into the middle of affairs, and say, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now, two or three things here about this matter by way of comfort. And the first comfort to us is, Well, well, the foundation is laid, the foundation is laid ; and in addition to the foundation there are goodly rows of precious stones builded up thereon. The Lord has not yet laid all the twelve bejewelled courses, but the instructed eye may see some of the lower bands of precious stones. Looking back in history I can see a foundation of martyrs built upon Christ, who with the apostles and confessors make up the lower foundations of jasper and sapphire and chalcedony ; I can see the glitter of those rows of gems upon the wall already. Read in the book of Revelation and see how they are described. For the last eighteen hundred years, stone upon stone, without sound of hammer, they have been built, and the walls are rising still. Glory be to God, the gospel is a success ; notwithstanding the sneer of Sanballat, and the cruel speech of Tobiah the Ammonite, the wall is being built, and the divine eye is upon it. It is God's great piece of architecture, and he regards it with delight. Concerning it, it may be said, “I the Lord do keep it ; I will keep it every moment ; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” There is for this building the divine decree, “Thus saith the Lord, Behold the man whose name is THE BRANCH, he shall build the temple of the Lord, even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the

glory." That decree is omnipotent; it is being fulfilled, and shall be fulfilled unto the end. I see at this moment the master mason upon the wall, and I read concerning him, "He shall not fail or be discouraged," and I read yet again of him, "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." I see with him, moreover, a band of men whose hearts the Lord has touched, and these labour day and night, and cease not, neither will they cease till the walls of Jerusalem are finished. He is the great master builder, and we, each one of us, bearing both sword and trowel, as we are taught by him, must be wise builders under his direction. The work is going on, for it is in hands that never weary, and it is directed by a mind that never faints; by firm decrees, also, is it banded and builded and cemented, so that it cannot fail, or so much as a stone thereof be cast down.

And we have this to encourage us—that God never has left a work unfinished yet. He began the creation. 'Tis true it was not so difficult a task as this building up of his church, for in the creation, though there was nothing, there was nothing in the way, and he spake and all things came into existence. Here in the building of the church there are two works—destruction and creation, the removal of the old and the erection of the new; but, nevertheless, he who said, "Behold, I make all things new," is quite equal to the task to which he has set himself; and as he did not leave the world half finished, did not make it a garden without a man to tenant it, nay, did not leave the man unfinished, but made the woman to be his helpmeet; so he will not leave the work of salvation, to which he has once put his hand, unfinished, but course upon course shall the jewels be laid; emerald shall follow chalcedony, the sardius shall be piled upon the sardonyx, the beryl upon the chrysolite, and the chrysoprasus upon the topaz, till at length, in the appointed age, the last garnishings of jacinth and amethyst shall crown the wall, and they shall bring forth the top-stone with shoutings of "grace, grace unto it!" He did not pause when he made the world because he needed fresh strength, or wait and say that the undertaking was too much; but its story ran on gloriously through all those wonderful six evenings and mornings until the seventh day came, and the Lord rested from all his work. The six days are passing over us now with their evening gloom and morning brightness, the Lord is making the new world, and he is building up his church, slowly, as we think, but surely and in fit time and due order. Wait ye, and in patience possess your souls, for there shall yet come that Millennial Sabbath, in which again the sons of God shall shout for joy, and the angels shall sing, because the word of God is accomplished and his work is done.

Have courage, my brethren! Bear your burden in removing the rubbish. Use your sword and your trowel still, for the work is the Lord's, and it shall be accomplished. If it were ours, woe worth the day in which it was laid upon such feeble shoulders; but since it is his we need not indulge a solitary trembling thought, but arise and be of good cheer.

II. Now I change the subject to OURSELVES awhile; and may God grant we may speak to profit for a few minutes upon that branch of our topic.

There is a building going on in us. It is the Spirit's work to edify

us ; that is to say, to build us up in grace, and that building up is carried on by the grace of love. "Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up." We are each one of us called to be builders, builders in God's strength, as I have said before, and let that not be forgotten ; but, beloved, I am afraid most of us have to say, "There is much rubbish ; so that we are not able to build the wall." Do you not often feel that you cannot be built up in heavenly graces, because of the rubbish of your own corrupt nature ? Oh, what a fall the fall was ! What a total ruin did it make of our moral nature ! Brethren, do you not discover—I do, almost every day—some fresh heap of rubbish which I hardly knew was there ? Points in which we thought ourselves strong turn out to be our weaknesses. There was an infirmity from which we half indulged the thought that we were clear, and therefore we were rather severe upon others for having such an infirmity and sin ; but at last it broke out in ourselves ; it always had been in us, but it had not had the occasion and opportunity ; at length the provocation came, and the hidden evil was revealed. Ah, brethren, much more of such rubbish remains in us. Oh, the rubbish of pride, of unbelief, of evil lustings, of anger, of despondency, of self-exaltation ! Brethren, it is not worth while to stir it, it is such a foul heap ! I have no desire to turn cinder-sifter to it, for there is never a jewel in it that will pay for the sifting ; but there it is, and the building of grace does not advance as we could wish, because of the corruption which still abideth in us, notwithstanding all that some may say.

Then there is oftentimes in Christian people the old rubbish of legal thought, of legal acting, and legal fearing. In our old estate we were going to be saved by our own merits. That was our notion. Since our conversion, we doctrinally abhor the idea of any thought of human merit, but experimentally we indulge it. The legal spirit will come in, like an ill weed it springs up spontaneously in the garden from which grace uprooted it. Though we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free, yet the flesh often tries to put the old yoke of bondage upon us, so that if Paul were here he would say to us, "Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh ?" Ishmael tries to domineer over Isaac ; though driven out of the house, he shows his tyrant face at the window. We get the bondsman's dread, ay, and sometimes entertain the bondsman's hope, and think that we are to work for wages, instead of understanding that the *gift* of God is eternal life, while the only wages we could earn would be the wages of sin, which is death. Oh, the old legal tendency ! How deep seated ! How prone to revive ! It will scarcely be conceived that sinners should at the same time be self-righteous and guilty ; but yet it is so, that, abounding as we do in the tendency to sin, we equally abound in the tendency to fancy that in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth some good thing. Hence arises another heap of rubbish.

And then old habits—what rubbish they are ! You who have been before your conversion guilty of gross sin, do you not often find the recollection of those old times coming over you like a hideous dream ? I know some who, when a hymn is given out, cannot help recollecting an old song which they used to sing, which is suggested to them by, perhaps, the holiest word in the psalm. Ay, and a text of Scripture

has sometimes conjured up before their memory a sin which they wished with all their hearts had never occurred, and which they would give their eyes to forget. Yes, the old habits will struggle for mastery, and if we do not fall into them, as I pray God we never may, yet will they vex and trouble us, and herein also, the much rubbish prevents the building up of the wall of the divine life.

So is it with worldly associations. Do not you find that even the common associations of business into which you are obliged to enter do very much by way of heaping rubbish upon the wall of your spirit? You have to meet with ungodly men. You cannot command their tongues: you may rebuke their language when it becomes profane, but there is very much of talk which is not profane, and which we could not very well rebuke, but which, nevertheless, is not sweet with godliness, or savoury with grace, and it damages us. We wish sometimes that we were away altogether from worldly men. We cry, "Woe is me that I dwell in Mesech, and tabernacle in the tents of Kedar!" And so again as the result of our being in the world, there is very much rubbish.

And I will tell you another kind of rubbish that I think some brethren have quite enough of, if not too much, that is, the rubbishing idea that they have come to be somebody after all. Many acquire that notion if they are getting on in the world. If God prospers them, then they say, "Ah, now I really am a great one, and worthy of much honour. I am not now like my poorer brethren." It is sad to see what fine airs certain prosperous professors give themselves; they forget the rock whence they were hewn, and lift up their horn on high, as if they were more than mortal. That is rubbish indeed.

But there are some others who have had choice seasons of fellowship with Christ, and they have been for a while free from temptation, and there has been no great upbreking of the great deep of corruption within them; and therefore they say, "Ah, now I am getting on: I think, somehow, I am getting up to the higher life. I should not wonder that I should be perfect one of these days." Rubbish, brother! It is all rubbish, every bit of it, it is not worthy harbouring for an instant. It may be very glittering rubbish, it looks amazingly like gold, but "all is not gold that glitters." Any notion of our own attainments which could lead us for a moment to speak of what we are with any degree of complacency is only rubbish. For my own part, I desire constantly to stand at the foot of the cross, with no other testimony concerning myself than this—

"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

Personal holiness is to be sought for with all our hearts, and it can only be obtained by faith in Jesus Christ—by simple faith in him. He gives us power to overcome sin through his precious blood; but, depend upon it, the moment we conclude that we have overcome, and can say what Paul could not say—that he had attained and was already perfect—we are in an evil case. Our pride has overpowered our judgment, and we are fools. If any one here is in a condition in which he is able to open his mouth wide in his own praise, I would advise

him to fetch a big dust-cart, or rather all the dust-carts in the parish, and take that boasting, every shovelful of it, away; for it is of no use to him, and it will very soon make such a dust as to fly in the eyes and ears of his Christian brethren. Build the wall we cannot while there is so much of this proud rubbish. "In me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing." Low down at the cross-foot, in the dust, be still our place; for we are in ourselves nothing, less than nothing, emptiness, vanity, death. That is our place. Christ is made of God unto you "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" in him be all your glorying, and in him alone, for if not so, the rubbish will cover up the foundation.

Now, I will suppose that some of you are mourning to-night—some of God's people—because of all this rubbish. I want to say to you this.

First, dear brethren, thank God that you have the foundation surely laid. Are you sure of that? I pray you rest not till you are certain of it.

"I know that safe with him remains,
Protected by his power,
What I've committed to his hands,
Till the decisive hour."

"I know whom I have believed." None but Jesus, none but Jesus. There rests our souls' only hope, upon his precious blood and righteousness; every other hope we heartily abhor. Well, the foundation is laid. Blessed be God for that! When a man is brought to rest alone in Jesus, then there is laid for him in Zion a sure foundation-stone, and to that he is cemented by sovereign grace.

Now, let us thank God again that the building up of his temple in us is his own work. He began it. He digged out and made clear to us our own emptiness. He cast out our self-righteousness, and he laid Christ where our self had once been. The Lord did that, and he has done everything else which has been done in us that has been worth the doing. I cannot, I am sure no brother here can, look upon any step he has ever taken as a real advance in divine life, which was taken in any strength but in the strength of God. Whatever we have done of ourselves had been much better undone, for all that nature spins will have to be unravelled sooner or later. "Salvation is of the Lord." Jonah learned that in the whale's belly. It was worth while getting into the whale's belly to learn. We want to know it through and through. Salvation is of the Lord alone, and unto him must be all the praise. And there is our comfort. It is his work to save us; we are not our own saviours, Christ is the Saviour. It is the Spirit's work to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. It is the Bridegroom, not the bride, that is to make the bride fit for her husband. So says the Scripture. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself, a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." It is he that presents the bride to himself, and he that makes her fit to be presented. Blessed be God, the work is in sure and competent hands.

And therefore, finally, let us by divine grace work on in faith, with

diligence. In faith, I say, believing that our work of faith and labour of love are not in vain in the Lord, believing that prayer is not a vain exercise, that drawing near to God in communion is not a vain thing, that trusting in the Lord is no idle dream, but that surely he will complete what he has begun. But let us add to faith the most earnest endeavours; let us diligently strive to get away this rubbish. Whatever bad habit obstructs our edification, God help us to conquer it. Whatever sin there is about us, may the blood of Jesus enable us to subdue it. Let us press forward, dear brethren and sisters, never content, never satisfied, till we wake up in his likeness; and, as we have not all his likeness yet, not satisfied with ourselves, let us press forward, looking to that which is before us, and forgetting that which is behind. Faith and diligence, by God's good grace, shall give us to be built up on our most holy faith, not with wood and hay and stubble, but with gold and silver and precious stones, which will abide the fire.

Look that ye be built on the foundation. That is the last and yet the first question, Are you on the foundation? Some build very rapidly, but they are not on the foundation. Yes, you have a fine character and you make a noble profession, but is the palatial structure based on the rocky foundation, or on the sand? Our little children at the seaside will build very fine castles with their wooden spades, but the next tide sweeps all away, because it is sand built on sand. I am afraid the religion of multitudes is just that—sand built on sand. Is that your religion, dear hearer? Does it consist of church-goings, or chapel-goings, and prayer-meetings, and sacrament-takings, and all that? Well, then, it is sand built on sand. But if you are a poor and needy sinner, and you have rested your soul on Jesus, and then, renewed in heart by his Spirit, have been zealous for good works, then is it no longer sand built on sand, but the work of the Spirit of God upon the one foundation which God laid from all eternity, in the person and the work of his only-begotten Son.

The Lord bless you, every one of you, for Jesu's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Nehemiah iv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—623, 641, 665.

THIS sermon I have revised at Mentone after an attack of severe pain, from which I am recovering by God's good hand. I beg, in my great feebleness, to ask the prayers of my friends that I may return to my beloved sphere of labour free from the disease which is my constant cross, and that every personal trial may work in me for the good of others, by rendering my ministry more deeply experimental. From this delicious retreat I desire Christian love to all the people of God, of whom I am both the servant and friend.

C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SHILOH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."—
Genesis xlix. 10.

THE dying patriarch was speaking of his own son Judah; but while speaking of Judah he had a special eye to our Lord, who sprang from the tribe of Judah. Everything therefore which he says of Judah, the type, he means with regard to our greater Judah, the antitype, our Lord Jesus Christ. You will remember how Jacob gathered his twelve sons around his bed, and, addressing them individually as representatives of the twelve tribes that bear their names, uttered divers predictions, and gave to each a special blessing. After first apostrophising Reuben and Simeon and Levi, he proceeds to salute Judah in words full of majesty:—"Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise." A happy expression; for the word "Judah" signifies "praise." The name was given to him by his mother as expressing her gratitude to God at his birth. It is now confirmed to him by his father, who discerns in it a presage of his character and his destiny. And verily this is true of Jesus. If the virgin mother hailed his advent, how much more do his grateful brethren laud his career! Do not his brethren recognise in him a leader and commander, a Saviour and a friend? Is it not here, on earth, our sweetest employment, and will it not be in heaven our highest delight to praise his name? The praise we bestow on men is mere flattery: the praise we receive from men is fulsome. But Jesus hath a peerless name, and his brethren derive from him priceless benefits. In Jesus are fulfilled the dreams of Joseph. The sun and the moon and the eleven stars all bow before him; all the sheaves make obeisance unto his sheaf. Let him be crowned with majesty who bowed his head to death is the common verdict of all the brotherhood of the house of God. "*Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies.*" As one that gets his hand upon the neck of his prey, stops its breath and destroys it; or as one who seizes his enemy by the

Nos. 1,157-8.

throat and flings him down to death. How true has this been of Jesus. He has laid his hand upon the neck of his enemies. When he came to the cross, fought foot to foot with the old Serpent, and there vanquished sin and death and hell for us, it was a terrible battle, but it ended in a splendid victory, of which we shall never cease to sing. Nor do we doubt but the hand of Jesus Christ is at this moment in the neck of his enemies. They may be very rebellious, and, for a time, they may seem to get the ascendancy; but he has got the upper hand of them, and as surely as truth and righteousness must flourish and prevail, as surely as Jehovah is the living God, the kingdom of Christ will yet break in pieces all the powers that resist it. "He shall break them as with a rod of iron: he shall dash them in pieces like potters' vessels." *"Thy father's children shall bow down before thee."* To the descendants of Judah in the persons of David and Solomon the whole nation did fealty. But worship of a higher order, homage of deeper significance, and adoration from a wider circle pertain to him, for whom our Father in heaven demands of all his faithful children love, honour, and obedience. *"Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up."* And how does this describe the Saviour—that "Lion of the tribe of Judah"—that strong and mighty Lion who entered into conflict with the lion of the pit and overcame him. From the prey he has gone up again, up into his glory, gone up beyond the stars, up to the right hand of the infinite majesty, there to sit in perpetual peaceful triumph. *"He stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion."* The lion may have been an emblem that befitted the son of Jesse. The *lion couchant* might have been fitly chosen for his heraldic device, when the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies and of Saul. Yet with how much more propriety may this emblem be emblazoned on the arms of Prince Emmanuel! Did he not stoop down? Was ever such a stoop as his? Let him be crowned with majesty who bowed his head to death. It is for this that he deserves to conquer, because he was willing to submit to shame and death itself for the sake of his people. How glorious is it to think that he has gone up, seeing that he once came down! Who should deserve such honours but he who laid such honours aside for a while? *"Who shall rouse him up?"* A grand question. Who shall rouse up the Lion of the tribe of Judah? Who dare do it? Who can stand against him? He is a lamb, gentle and tender; "A bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench;" but let him be provoked, then fiercer than a lion that roareth from the forest will he be upon his foes. So shall it come to pass on that tremendous day when he will ease him of his adversaries and shake himself clear of all his enemies. Remember ye not these terrible words of his:—"Beware, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver"? *"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come."* The sovereignty remained with Judah. It did continue to be the royal tribe till the prophetic epoch. When other tribes lost their peculiar position and their positive distinctiveness, Judah still remained, and it survives in the common appellation of the Hebrew people to this day. The Israelites are more commonly called

Jews than by any other name. Jesus, of the tribe of Judah, is the **King** of the Jews, even though they reject him. Over his head upon the cross was written the indelible truth in letters of Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Yea, he is King of all faithful Jews and of all believing Gentiles at this hour, with a sovereignty wider than that of emperors—yea, as wide as the dwelling places of all mankind. He is "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Of Shiloh it is the patriarch speaks when with the vision of a seer he describes the grand climax. Before the dim organs of his sight he saw all his twelve sons gathered to take leave of their dying sire. Before the beaming eyes of his faith he beheld the gathering of all their distant posterity, or peradventure of all the kindreds of the earth to greet with glad acclaim the everlasting King, of whose kingdom there shall be no end. "*Unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*" Thus simply and thus pointedly does Jacob refer to the Lord Jesus Christ by the name of Shiloh. Of that name and of that prophecy I shall try to speak.

First, let the title, "SHILOH," and secondly the TESTIMONY, "To him shall the gathering of the people be," engage our attention.

The title, "SHILOH." What an old word it is! What an old world word! I should not wonder if it was one of Jacob's own coining. A pet name is often the product of peculiar love. Tender affection takes this kindly turn. Those whom we fondly regard we familiarly call by some other name than chance has bequeathed or choice bestowed. Not content with the names that others understand or use, there is often a new mode of recognition between two who love each other, as much as to say, "You are to me what you are to none upon earth beside me." Even God gives to his people new names; and I do not wonder if they give to him new names. Well may believers have each a favourite name for Jesus. Which name of your Lord do you love the best? If the question were passed round, perhaps some would say—and the majority might—"Jesus: the name divinely sweet." Another would say,

"Sweeter sounds than music knows
Charm me in *Emmanuel's* name."

"That is the choice name." Others it may be might put in a claim for pre-eminence to the title of "The Well-beloved," which always seems to me to have a great charm about it; and if George Herbert were here, you know he would say, "How sweetly doth 'My Master' sound!" "My Master." That was the name he loved to call his Lord by. Well, Jacob's name for Jesus was "Shiloh;" and it is so long ago since he called him Shiloh that I do not wonder that we have almost forgotten the meaning of it. He knew it had a wealth of meaning as it came from his lips, and the meaning is there still; but the well is deep; and those that have studied the learned languages have found this to be a word of such rare and singular occurrence, that it is difficult, with any positive certainty, to define it. Not that they cannot find a meaning, but that it is possible to find so many meanings of it. Not that it is not rich enough, but that there is an embarrassment of riches. It may be interpreted in so many different

ways. I will give you, one by one, some of the meanings that have been proposed. There is something to be said for each one. Though I shall not trouble you with the names of the learned authors who stand up for each particular translation, as that would be useless, I will take care to put last the one which I conceive to be the best, has the most authority, and will probably commend itself to you as the most acceptable.

Some maintain that the word "Shiloh" signifies "sent." Like that word you have in the New Testament, "He said to him, go to the pool of Siloam, which is, by interpretation, *Sent*." You observe the likeness between the words *Siloam* and *Shiloh*. They think that the words have the same meaning; in which case *Shiloh* here would mean the same as *Messiah*—the *sent* one—and would indicate that Jesus Christ was the messenger, the sent one of God, and came to us, not at his own instance, and at his own will, but commissioned by the Most High, authorised and anointed to that end. Here let us stop a minute. We rejoice to know that, whatever this title means, it is quite certain that Jesus Christ was sent. It is a very precious thing to know that we have a Saviour; but often and often it has cheered my heart to think that this dear Saviour who came to save me did not come as an amateur, unauthorised from the courts of heaven, but he came with the credentials of the Eternal Father, so that, whatever he has done, we may be sure he has done it in the name of God. Jehovah will never repudiate that which Jesus has accomplished. Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation; he is a mediator of God's own sending. He is our Substitute; but he is a Substitute of God's own finding. "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." So saith the oracle, and who shall gainsay it? "The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." It is the Lord that has done it. An ambassador who had no credentials from the court he represented would be but a dubious boon to the people; but when as a plenipotentiary, with full authority from his sovereign, he comes with terms of peace, he might well be received without hesitation or demur. Sinner, have you received the Saviour Jesus? You profess to acknowledge the God who sent him, but know that in turning from the Emissary you are spurning the Sovereign. If you deny Jesus you defy God himself; yea, you make God a liar, because you have not believed his testimony concerning his Son. Beloved, do you welcome Jesus Christ as being sent to you *personally*? When you have laboured under a sense of sin, burdened to the very ground with trouble of conscience, was Jesus ever sent to you to say, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth"? Was he ever sent to lead you to look? Did you look unto him, and were you lightened? Oh, then, you will for ever bless his name, the name of the Most High, who sent such an one that he might lift you up out of your miseries, bring the bondaged one out of the dungeon, and set the captive free. Dwell, sweetly dwell, upon this meaning of the word *Shiloh*. If it means "sent," there is great sweetness in it.

Others have referred it to a word, the root of which signifies *the Son*. Upon such a hypothesis the name would be strictly appropriate to our Lord. He is the "Son of God;" he is the "Son of Man;"

he was the "Son of Judah;" he was the "Son of David:" "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given." Let us linger for a while upon this gloss—"Until Shiloh," "Until the Son shall come." Be the annotation right or wrong, Jesus is the Son of God. He that hath come to save us is divine. No angel could bear the stupendous burden of redemption. Sooner might angels create than redeem, but they can do neither the one nor the other; they can only sing the high praises of him who is able to do both. Who but God himself could snatch a sinner from hell? God has done it. He that died upon the cross was none other than he that made the world. Trust the divine Saviour? O sinner! if thou hast had any doubts about the sufficiency of Jesus Christ to save, cast them all aside; for, if he be the Son of the Highest, and "God over all, blessed for ever," they that rest in him shall never be confounded. The Son of God is he, but he is also the *Son of Man*, and this is an equal joy to us. Jesus Christ is "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," a man like ourselves. Though he is now in heaven, think not that he is transformed into a spirit there, or that he hath discarded our nature, or disowned our flesh and blood. Oh, no. After he was risen from the dead he appeared to his disciples, and eat with them; he partook of a fish and of honeycomb, to show that he was not spirit but flesh, and he said, "Handle me, and see, a spirit hath not flesh and bone: as ye see me have." In that very body of his he has gone up into his glory, and to-day, at the right hand, there sits he—a man clothed in a body like our own. Oh, beloved! let not terror affright us, or misgivings keep us back from a high priest that can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, a dear Saviour who is not ashamed to call us brethren. "This man receiveth sinners." Oh, sinners! may ye be willing to be received by him. Let us bless him as the Son—the Son of God, the Son of Man.

A third meaning has been given to the word "Shiloh" which rather paraphrases than translates it. The passage, according to certain critics, would run something like this:—"Until he come to *whom it belongs, to whom it is, for whom it is reserved*;" or, as Ezekiel puts it, "Overturn, until he shall come *whose right it is*, and thou wilt give it him." It may mean, then, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah until he shall come whose that sceptre is." This meaning is supported by many learned authorities, and has its intrinsic value. The sceptre belongs to Christ. All sceptres belong to him. He will come by-and-by and verify his title to them. Have you not seen the picture that represents Nelson on board a French man-of-war, receiving the swords of the various captains he has conquered, while there stands an old tar at his side putting all these swords underneath his arm as they are brought up. I have often pictured to myself our great Commander, the only King by divine right, coming back to this our earth, and gathering up the sceptres of the kings in sheaves, and putting them on one side, and collecting their crowns; for he alone shall reign King of kings and Lord of lords. When the last and greatest of all monarchs shall come a second time, "without a sin-offering unto salvation"—oh, the glory of his triumph! He has a right to reign. If ever there was a king by nature, and by birth, it is the Son of David; if ever there was one who would be elected to the

monarchy by the suffrages of all his subjects, it is Jesus Christ. How often do we sing—

“Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all;”

and we cannot repeat it too often. Our hearts and lips ought to be always saying, “Crown him; crown him; crowns become the victor’s brow.” His is the right to reign. Dear souls, acknowledge that right. If you never have acknowledged it, acknowledge it now. “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, while his wrath is kindled but a little.” You that do love him, and have made him your King, oh, kiss his feet again! Let him have your highest homage, your purest love, your perpetual service. Was ever such a King as thou art, O Jesus! “the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely”? Let him be crowned with majesty for ever and ever. To him the royalty belongs, for him it is reserved.

The interpretation, however, which has the most support, and which I think has the fairest claim to be accorded correct, is that which derives the word “Shiloh” from the same root as the word “Salem.” This makes it signify *peace*. “Until the *peace*, or the *peace-bearer*, or the *peace-giver*,” or, if you like it better, “the *rest*, or the *rest-maker*—shall come.” Select the word you prefer, it will sufficiently represent the sense. “Until the *peace-bringer* come, until the *rest-maker* come.” His advent bounds the patriarch’s expectation and his desire. Oh, beloved, what a vein of soul-charming reflection this opens! Do you know what rest means? Such “peace, peace,” such perfect peace as he hath whose soul is stayed; because he trusteth, as the prophet Isaiah hath it. Have you ever said to yourself, “There is nothing I desire—nothing that I wish for; I am satisfied—perfectly content; I am without a fear, without a dread”? “No,” say you, “I never reached that elysium. You may be worth millions of money without ever coming to that pass. All the gold in the world will never fill a man’s heart; and you may have broad acres across which a swift horse could hardly rush in a day, but you will not have enough. All the land in the world cannot fill a heart. You may have all the beauty, rank, honour, and fame that ever can come to a human being, and yet say, “Ah me! I am wretched still.” But full many who have found Jesus have been able to say, “It is enough: I need no more.” Believing in Jesus, and learning to yield up everything to his will, living to his glory, and loving him supremely, we do enjoy peace with God—a “peace that passeth all understanding,” which “keeps our heart and mind” by Jesus Christ. Are we adopted into the family of God?—we are sure that he never did cast a child out of the family that was once received into it. Are we made members of the body of Christ?—There is no fear of dismemberment; that which is perfected and compacted together cannot be mangled or torn asunder. Our good hope through grace is not precarious. Well may we sing with the seraphic Toplady—

“Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
Are the glorified spirits in heaven.”

Here is rest ! Man may well take his rest when he has nothing to do, when it is all done for him. And that is the gospel. The world's way of salvation is "*Do*," God's way of salvation is, "It is all done for you ; accept and believe." The world, that says "*Do*," never does anything, while the gospel which tells us "It is all done," imparts such joy and peace within that we spring to our feet ready and willing to do and dare ought for him who gave himself up for us. While active and passive obedience spring out of the doctrine of grace, nothing but pride and self-righteousness can come out of the religion which prates of merit and prescribes duties to be done in order that you may be saved. All that ever will be saved were saved on Calvary's bloody tree. Jesus said, "It is finished." Here his humiliation reached its climax ; he humbled himself even unto death. It *was* finished. Those for whom he died were there and then redeemed. The ransom price paid for them exempted them from the penalty of their transgressions, exonerated them from legal responsibilities, and extinguished for them the fiery threat of perdition. He had suffered in their stead, and they could not be called upon to suffer for themselves. He had offered a righteousness to God on their behalf, and they were accepted because of that righteousness. Do you say, "I wish I were one of those people" ? Dost thou believe in Jesus ? Then thou art one of them. Dost thou trust Jesus ? Then thou art saved. The moment a sinner believes and trusts in his crucified Lord, he is pardoned at once ; he receives salvation in full through Christ's blood. Do but rest thy soul on Jesus, and it is *done*, and peace will enter thy soul—oh, such a deep and blessed peace, the like of which is not to be found out of heaven ! for Jesus is the great peace-giver and peace-maker : he is our peace. God grant us to know him and to understand this aspect of his mediatorial character. Believe me, my hearers, I feel in my soul, as I look round upon you, the utmost longing for you all. Oh, that you did know my Lord and the peace he gives. It is years ago—three and twenty years or more—since I went to him. I could not believe it possible that he would receive me. I felt myself too great a sinner. How should there be mercy for me ? But I heard a sermon from the text, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth !" I never understood it before, but when I came to understand that all I had to do was *to look*, oh, what a revelation it was to me ! No feelings, no workings, no doings, no purchase-money demanded as a qualification. Christ on the cross was evidently set forth crucified before my eyes. I did but *look*, and I was saved ; saved the moment I looked. When I turned to the Scriptures I found that was just what the Scriptures said, "He that believeth in him is not condemned." I did believe it, I did trust it, I did simply rest there. Neither shall I ever forget the rush of joyous feeling that went through my spirit, the cessation of long years of melancholy, bordering on despair, and the coming out into a clear light, which I thank God I have never lost, for, with all the troubles of this material life, I would not change places with any man that breathes, no, nor with the angels before God's throne. The station and the privilege of angels will not bear comparison with the eternal dignities reserved for the saints. For an angel no redeemer ever died, and no angel will be

able to sing, "Worthy is he that hath washed me in his blood!" Oh, to be superlatively indebted to the infinite love of Jesus, to be a cleansed sinner, and to be put among the children, is so enchanting that it is enough to make one say, "Ah! not even an angel would I envy, nor with one of those celestial ministers would I change my happy lot." I wish you could all sympathise in this. Would that you all had fellowship with us in this grace wherein we stand. Many of you have, thank God. Some of you have not. What do you poor people do without a Saviour? I cannot make out why you who have got so little in this life do not look out for the promise of a better inheritance. And what do you poor rich people do without a Saviour? I pity you most of all, for your lives are generally passed in a very senseless and insipid fashion. With nothing but a round of visits to pay, and a few elegant trifles to attend to, like butterflies you flit from flower to flower. A poor man's time is taken up with hard labour; but you often ask yourselves, and consult one another how best you can spend the hours and kill the time that hangs heavily on your hands. If you cannot think upon Christ, if you cannot fall back upon the covenant of grace, if you cannot look up to the eternal God, and say, "My Father, thou art mine, and with thee shall I dwell for ever," I pity you, whether you be rich or poor. God grant you to have and to enjoy the fulness of treasure that is in Jesus Christ; then you can say:—

"I would not change my blest estate
With all that earth calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."

Trusting, then, dear friends, that your faith has identified the Shiloh of Jacob's vision, let us occupy the few minutes that remain to us in considering the TESTIMONY which the patriarch here bears. "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

"UNTO HIM," as the Hebrew runs, "shall the *gatherings* of the *peoples* be." So wide the circumference that converges in this glorious centre. It comprehends all the peoples of the Gentiles as well as Jews. Of course it includes the favoured nation, but it also takes in the isles afar off; yea, all of us, my brethren. "Unto him shall the gatherings of the peoples be." What joy this announcement should give us! Do you realise it, that around Jesus Christ, around his cross, which is the great uplifted standard, the people shall gather? Just open your eyes and look. If you can see, and your eyes have been touched with eye-salve, you may perceive the power of attraction by which this magnificent issue is already in progress. Over yonder in America a poor sinner is seeking eternal life. If he is seeking aright, he is being gathered to Christ. Or, look at home in your own country. Perhaps, to-night, in many thousands of places that are open for divine worship, the like magnetic influence is at work. I only wish I could hope that there was some one in every assembly that was looking for eternal life. If it be so, they are all looking to Jesus Christ. Cast your eye now to India, or France, or Prussia, or over to Australia, in whatever direction you will; every soul that is in earnest seeking life is looking it through Jesus Christ. I see them coming; he is the centre,

and they are all drawing near to him. Every soul that is saved is drawn to Jesus ; none are saved without him. The people gather to him as their only hope, and all succour else has failed. They do not fly to him until they have tried every other hope. Nobody ever comes to Christ until he cannot go anywhere else. The sinner comes to him by stress of weather—driven in sometimes, as ships are into harbours of refuge, because they cannot keep pace with it outside the bar. It is when the sinner is in difficulties that he is driven to Jesus Christ ; and every soul that really is looking for eternal life in the right place is looking to Jesus and gathering to Jesus ; and I see little silver threads going out from Christ, the centre, from all over the world, drawing men to himself. I hope there is one of these threads drawing you. Oh ! yield to the gentle pressure ! Follow it ; for there is your only hope.

Look again, and you will see that all over the world those that are saved are gathering to Jesus, rallying round him, and accepting him as their leader, instructor, and king. The Jews said, "We have no king but Cæsar ;" the Christians say, "We have no king but Jesus." I mean no spiritual lord, no teacher, no leader, except Jesus Christ himself. "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." His people out of all nations shall come and take his easy yoke and wear it, and find rest unto their souls. And now, at this moment, my eyes can see myriads all over the world who are coming nearer and nearer to Jesus, with instant eager cry, saying, "Draw us, Lord, draw us nearer to thyself ; make us more like thyself ; help us to live more to thy glory." Is there one of these golden threads drawing you ? Then run if you are drawn, and seek to love your Lord and serve him better than ever you have done, for "unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

Be assured of this ; Christ is the only centre of true unity to his people. There is a society, I believe, for the promotion of the unity of Christendom. I am afraid it does not do much good, or cement much fellowship. The unity of Christendom ! That will all depend upon what is the key-stone of the arch you are going to build. If you expect there will be a unity of the Greek Church, and the Latin Church, and the Anglican Church, I can only say that were all three united the union of Christians would be as far off as ever. In the midst of that *professed* Christendom, but distinct from it, there is an inner Christendom, a secret, sacred brotherhood of real Christians that knows little about these great secular churches. The true Christendom consists of all that worship God in the spirit, not having confidence in the flesh. The true church consists of all that believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and are quickened by the Holy Ghost, the only unity that society could ever get would be a confederation ecclesiastical, to be dominated over by some lordly priest or other. No desirable thing certainly. Christ is the centre of the church, and true unity will be found in him. "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Were I to give you a book to read about Jesus Christ, full of love to him, and when you had read it were I to ask you who wrote it, I warrant you would not guess rightly what denomination the man belonged to. Perhaps you will say, "Well, there is a flavour in it of Roman Catholicism now

and then ; but really it is so good a book I cannot think a Roman Catholic could have written it." "Or," you will say, "it has a little of the Plymouth Brother here and there, and that is not a sweet flavour ; but still, it is so good I hardly think he could have written it." By-and-by you will say, "I do not know at all ; I am at a loss." Often and often after reading books which have a savour of Christ in them, I have felt a love to the author, though I may have found out, perhaps, that he was an ecclesiastical opponent of mine. I do not care ; I love him if he loves my Master, be he who he may, wherever he comes from. When we are down on our knees praying for the kingdom of Christ, or standing up to sing Messiah's praise, it is wonderful how like we are to each other. Mr. Wesley did not like Toplady, and Mr. Toplady did not like Wesley, called him "an old fox," and said that he would pluck him, and have him "tarred and feathered ;" but take up any hymn book you like, and you will find, side by side, Charles Wesley's "Jesus, Lover of my Soul," and Toplady's "Rock of Ages, cleft for me ;" and which is the better hymn of the two I am sure I do not know, they are so much alike. So were these men, after all, two blessed souls, for all their mistakes and all their misunderstandings of one another. When you get to the cross you get together. "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." When you come to talk of him and what he did—his life and death, his atoning sacrifice, his glorious conquest of all our foes—then are you agreed.

Oh, brethren, we must therefore strive vigorously, and try incessantly, to lift Christ up. We want to see, during this year, a great gathering of souls. Well, we shall see it if we lift Christ up. Here is a lot of steel filings among a heap of ashes. How can I separate them ? There are a great many ways of trying to do it. Bring a magnet in ; put a magnet into the heap ; see how it draws the steel filings away. In this congregation there is a great number of individuals, but who among them are God's elect I do not nor can I know ; but let me preach Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ will draw his own. "My sheep hear my voice ; I know them and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life." Preach Christ ; that is the magnet ; he will draw his own to himself. And, dear friends, if we want to see conversions in this beyond all past years there must be more preaching, more constant preaching of Christ ; Christ must be in every sermon, and he must be top and bottom too of all the theology that is preached—"Jesus Christ and him crucified," and nothing else. I am bound to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified, for I do not know anything else to preach. My simplicity is my safeguard. I have often felt to be of Paul's mind : "I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." Some are wise to interpret prophecies ; I am not : enough for me to know about the cross. Some are able to split a hair, they can a hair divide betwixt the north and the north-west side. I am no logician. If, knowing the terrors of the Lord, I can persuade men to fly to Christ, and escape from the wrath to come, I shall fulfil my mission to my heart's delight. Consider this, all of you. Let each of us go back to the first principles of the gospel, and bring out, again and again, the old, old story of sinners lost and a Saviour come to

redeem, of guilt sinking a man to hell like a millstone, and the Saviour taking all that guilt away. If you preach the blood, the precious blood of Jesus, you set forth the great soul-saving gospel, and you do honour to him unto whom "shall the gathering of the people be."

And, brethren, by the climax of destiny that is opened up, let the conduct of our daily life be disciplined. Let us aim to gather more and more to Jesus ourselves. We cannot get too near to him. Be it ours to strive to get closer than ever we have been. Even if a cross should be necessary to raise us, let us not be afraid of the cross, so long as it brings us nearer to Jesus. You are happiest, healthiest, and holiest when you are nearest to Christ. To him shall the continual "gathering of the people be."

And oh! let us pray, also, that this gathering may go on both among saints and sinners—that saints may gather nearer to Jesus, and that sinners may gather savingly to him. The text says, "To him shall the gathering of the people be." It is a faithful saying, and we do believe it. Not death nor hell can keep back the Lord's elect from coming to Christ. Come they must and shall; for the divine decree shall be accomplished, and each one for whom Jesus specially shed his blood shall be saved infallibly, saved beyond all risk; but it is ours to pray for it. Oh, Lord Jesus, it is said, "Unto thee shall the gathering of the people be." Make it so. The gathering shall be wrought by thyself. "He shall gather the lambs in his arms;" it is his to gather the strayed sheep; he gathereth together the outcasts. Surely he is the great gatherer. Well may they be gathered to him when he himself gathers them. Ask him to gather your children. Ask him to gather your dear beloved ones under your house-roof, your servants, your neighbours. Ask him to gather them. Ask him to gather this great city. Oh, what a city it has grown to be! Would God that Jesus had it! It would be a glorious koh-i-noor in the state jewels of Christ if he could call London his own. The biggest of cities—would God it were the holiest. Oh, that it were wholly Christ's from one end to the other. They used to say, in Cromwell's day, that if you walked down Cheapside at a certain hour, you would have heard the voice of family prayer and praise at every house in the whole street, both morning and evening. I trow it is not so in any street in London now. We have gone back since the grand old Puritanic times. But we will repair to the throne again by God's good grace, and yet shall there be a salt in this city, for the city shall be seasoned through and through with the power of the gospel of Jesus. Only to your knees! to your knees! to your knees! if you would have it so. You should get this fulfilled among your fellow citizens, if you would get it first vouchsafed to you as a boon of your God. Tell him he has said, "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Hold him to his word, plead with him that he cannot break it, and we shall live to see the day yet. "To him shall the gathering of the people be."

Oh, my dear hearers! as I draw these reflections to a close one thought passes over my mind to which I must give expression. You will all of you either be gathered to Christ to be saved, or else you will have to be gathered by-and-by for another purpose. There shall ring out upon the midnight air a trumpet call that shall be loud enough

to be heard east and west, and south and north ; it shall startle all the sleepers, and more than that, it shall arouse the dead ; at its sound the sepulchre shall vomit forth its prey, and they that are rocked in slumber beneath the waves of ocean shall hear that trumpet call and rise, the whole mass of Adam's family, the myriads of all our race. Oh, what an assembly will that be ! The motley throng within these walls is but as a grain of sand, compared with the sea-shore, to the multitudes that will then be congregated. Gather ye ! gather ye ! ye that have been dead these six thousand years. Gather ye ! gather ye ! ye that were drowned in Noah's flood. Gather ye ! gather ye ! all ye hosts of Egypt, and ye myriads of Chaldea, and of Babylon, of Persia, and of Greece. Gather ye ! ye legions of Rome ! ye myriads of the middle ages ! ye countless millions of China and of swarthy Hindostan, and you of the world across the sea ! Gather ye ! gather ye ! men of every skin and every tongue ! For ye must gather, and there in the midst of you all shall be the cloud sailing through the air, and on it the great white throne of him whose spotless justice is mirrored in it. There will you stand, and if you have not looked at Christ on the cross, you will have to look at the Christ upon the throne ; and if ye have never trusted him, ye will then have to tremble at him. Hark, how the trumpet sounds ! How that clarion rings out again and again and again ! And lo ! all are there. And now he comes, whose pomp is beyond conception, and the books are opened. As they are opened, page after page, he reads the story of each man's life, and he has come to yours, and he reads the page that chronicles this fleeting hour. On such a night, gathered with this great congregation, you were bidden to believe in Jesus, and bow down before the great Peace-giver ; you refused, and sealed your doom for ever. Shall it be so ? Oh ! shall it be so ? God grant it may not be so. May there be another book opened, which is the Book of Life, and in that book may your name stand recorded as one who humbly trusted in the finished work of Jesus, and therefore was accepted in the Beloved, and found mercy on that day. The Lord grant it to every one of you. I may not ever again speak to some of you as long as I live. This then I *do* say to you while your ears are open and attentive to my voice, Lay hold on eternal life ; put your trust in Jesus. And if, beloved, any of you to whom I am so familiar, to whom I speak so often, if you should depart from the world while I am absent, or if I should never return, but find a grave in some distant land, I charge you, meet me on the other side of Jordan ; I charge you, meet me at my Master's right hand ; I charge you, cling to the atoning sacrifice by faith ; and we will meet together where he sits and reigns—our best beloved—the Judah, the Jesus, whom all his brethren shall praise—the Shiloh, the Prince of peace, for whose glorious advent all his saints look, and to whom they shall be gathered in fulness of joy for ever and for ever. Amen and amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SIEVE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."—Matthew vii. 21.

IN reading this chapter one is led to feel that it is not, after all, an easy thing to be a sincere Christian. The way is hard, the road is narrow. Who will may represent the way to heaven as being easy; our Saviour does not so speak of it. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way, and few there be that find it." "Many are called and few chosen." The difficulty of being right is increased by the fact that there are men in the world whose trade it is to make counterfeits. There were, and there are, many false prophets. Our Saviour has spoken about them in this chapter, and given us a way of testing them; but they are carrying on their trade still as successfully as ever. Now, since there are traitors abroad whose business it is to deceive, we ought to be doubly vigilant and constantly upon our watch-tower, lest we be misled by them. I charge you, examine every statement you hear from Christian pulpits and platforms; I charge you, sift and try every religious book by the great standard of the word of God. Believe none of us if we speak contrary to this word—yea, believe not an angel from heaven if he preach any other gospel than that which is contained in inspired Scripture. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no truth in them." God grant us grace to escape from false prophets! We shall not do so if we are careless and off our guard, for the sheep-skin garment so effectually covers the wolf, the broad phylactery so decorates the hypocrite, that thousands are deceived by the outward appearance, and do not discover the cheat. Crafty are the wiles of the enemy, and many foolish ones are still ignorant of his devices. Tutored by the experience of ages, seducers and evil men not only wax worse and

worse, but they grow more and more cunning. If it were possible, they would deceive even the very elect. Happy shall they be, who, being elect, are kept by the mighty power of God unto salvation, so that they are not carried away with any error.

In addition to the fact that there are false teachers, so is it certain that there are false professors. There never was a time in the church of God in which all were Christians who professed to be so. Surely the golden age of the church must have been when the Master himself was in it, and had selected twelve choice spirits to be nearest to his person, and to act, as it were, the prime ministers of his kingdom; yet there was a devil amongst the twelve, a devil in the church of which Jesus was pastor. Judas, the treasurer of the apostles, was also a son of perdition. When Paul and the apostles kept watch over the elect church, surely that must have been a happy time; and when persecution raged all around, and acted like a great winnowing fan to drive away the chaff, one would have expected to find that the threshing-floor contained only clean grain; but it was not so, the heap upon the threshing-floor of the church was even then a mingled mass of corn and chaff. Some turned aside from love of the world, and others were deluded into grievous error, while there were others who remained in the church to discredit it by their impurity, and to bring chastisements upon it by their sin. We shall never see a perfect church till we see the Lord face to face in heaven. Above yon clouds is the place for perfection; but here, alas, nothing is undefiled; and even in the purest churches we find deceivers and deceived. Among you over whom it is my calling to preside, I know that there are false professors, lovers of the world rather than lovers of God; and though I cannot remove you, any more than the servants of the householder could uproot the tares from the wheat, yet I sigh over you, and you are my daily cross and burden. Oh, that God would convert you, and make you true to your professions, or else remove you from the church which you so greatly grieve and weaken.

But now, if in the church of God there are those who are deceivers and deceived, the question comes to each one of us, "May not we also be mistaken? Is it not possible that we, though making a profession of religion, may, after all, be insincere or deluded in that profession, and fail to be what we think we are?" Therefore let us put ourselves at this time into the attitude of self-examination, and whatever is spoken, let it come home to us personally. May we try ourselves whether we be right or no, not flinching from any pointed truth; but anxiously desiring to be tried and tested before the Lord himself.

The text I would bring before you by noticing, first, that it contains a *very commendable expression*, "Lord, Lord;" but, secondly, it *was used by gross hypocrites*; and then, thirdly, we shall show *wherein these hypocrites failed*—what it was that they lacked which rendered it impossible that they should enter into the kingdom.

I. First, then, the text contains A VERY COMMENDABLE SPEECH. We may be sure the speech was a good one, or the hypocrites would not have used it as a cloak for their hypocrisy. Men do not use dubious expressions when they want to appear exceedingly devout. They take care, however bad their deeds may be, to make their words at any rate

sound well. Therefore the persons spoken of in the text said to Jesus, "Lord, Lord." It is a fitting mode of speech for each one of us to use.

And first, dear friends, we ought to say to Jesus, "Lord, Lord," in reference to his divinity. How can we be saved if we do not? Jesus Christ of Nazareth is to us Lord and God. We do not hesitate to use the language of Thomas when he put his finger into the print of the nails, and to say to him, "My Lord and my God." Let others say of him what they will, and make him to be a mere man, or a prophet, or a delegated God, such talk is nothing to the point with us; we believe him to be very God of very God, and worship him this day as he is enthroned in the highest heavens, believing him to be worthy of the adoration which is due to God alone. I do not wonder that those who believe our Lord Jesus Christ to be a mere man say severe things of us; nor must they wonder if we deliver ourselves of very strong utterances with regard to them. If we are wrong, we are idolaters, for we worship a person who is only a man; if we are right, much of their teaching is blasphemous, for they deny the deity of the Christ of God. There is a great gulf between us, and it is only common honesty to admit it. To conceal the fact in order to be thought liberal would be a mean artifice, unworthy of an honest man. The question in debate is a vital one, and there can be no halting place between one view or the other. Compromise must always be impossible where the truth is essential and fundamental. There are some points in which we may agree to differ, but these are points in which there can be no mutual concessions or tonings down of statement. Christ Jesus is either God or he is not, and if he be God, as we believe he is, then those who reject his deity cannot be true believers in him, and, therefore, must miss the benefits which he promises to those who receive him. I cannot conceive any man to be right in religion if he be not right in reference to the person of the Redeemer. "You cannot be right in the rest unless you think rightly of him." If you will not have him to be your God, neither will he save you. Let his abundant miracles, his divine teaching, his unique character, and his resurrection convince you that "the Word was God," and is in all respects equally divine with the Father and the Spirit.

The expression before us is commendable under another aspect, one in which very likely it was used by these hypocrites. We use it towards Christ to denote that we own him to be our Master; he is "Lord, Lord" to us. In the true church of Christ there are no lords but this one Lord. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." "Lord Bishop" is an expression suitable for Babylon or Rome, but not for the new Jerusalem. I challenge the whole world to find any apostolic title of the kind, or anything approaching to it in the days of the apostles. It is as contrary to Christianity as hell is contrary to heaven. As servants of one common Master, we stand upon an equality. Did he not say, "The rulers of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but it shall not be so among you." Christ is Lord to us, and none else in the church of God. And the church takes care, when she is in a right state, that there shall never be any legislator for her except Christ. He is her law-maker, and not Parliaments or kings. Jesus walks in the midst of the churches, among his

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golden candlesticks, to observe and prescribe her order; he tolerates no other lawgiver or ruler in spiritual things. We know no Rabbi but Christ. Doctrine comes from his lips and from his word, but from no councils and no teachers or divines. As to the rules of the church, if they are not the rules of Jesus, given by the authority of his Spirit, they are no rules for us. As for human traditions, prescriptions, and ordinances in reference to religion, rend them to pieces and toss them to the winds. Christ is Lord, and every Christian's heart echoes to the words when I say, in the name of his people, "Jesus, son of Mary, Son of God, thou art to us Lord, Lord. Thy mother's sons bow down before thee and do thee homage. Thou more than Joseph, all our sheaves do obeisance to thy sheaf, and the sun and moon and eleven stars of Israel's household bow before thee—thou who wast separate from thy brethren for thy brethren's sake." Unto Jesus, who was once nailed to the tree, be honour throughout all ages. He is Lord, Lord, in that sense.

And, beloved, as he is thus beyond all controversy Lord divinely and Lord as legislator, it is right that this should be spoken. It was a brave thing for the Covenanters of Scotland to be ready to die for the headship of Christ in his church, and I trust there are thousands still alive who would as gladly relinquish life itself to preserve the crown-right of our exalted Lord. It would be well worth any man's while to lay down his life to defend the deity of Christ, which doctrine cannot be taken away without removing the very foundations of the faith; and if the foundations be moved, what can the righteous do? Bear your testimony, then, ye followers of the Lamb, and be not afraid to own his name. Though hypocrites have said it, you need not blush to say it; for it is most true that Jesus is both Lord and God. Say "Lord, Lord" with unfaltering tongue. Say it daily by your actions. Have respect unto your Master, and let others see that you respect him. Do *this* good action because Christ bids you; refuse to do *that* evil thing because Christ forbids you. Move in *that* line, because he leads the way; refuse that other line, because you see not his footprints there. Let all men see that you practically say, "Lord, Lord," whenever you think of Jesus. This is the very spirit of Christianity—to do what Christ bids us, and to honour him in heart and lip and life evermore. I wish that some Christians were a little more outspoken in their acknowledgment of their great Lord and Master; and I commend these hypocrites, if I can commend them at all, that they wisely choose a fit and godly speech, though, alas! they dishonoured the good speech, by using it so foully, when they said "Lord, Lord."

II. And now, secondly, THERE WERE HYPOCRITES WHO USED THIS EXCELLENT MODE OF SPEECH. What sort of people were they who said "Lord, Lord," and yet the Master says of them, that not every one of them shall enter into the kingdom of heaven? Well, I think he refers to a considerable number of people, and I will seek them out. I wonder whether I shall find any in this congregation. Help me, my brethren, by your own self-examination to discover these people.

There can be no doubt our Lord referred, in the first place, to a certain class of superficial externalists, who said "Lord, Lord," and their religion ended. Such persons still exist all around us.

They are superficial in nature, and in general character. They say good things, but they never feel what they say. Their pious expressions come from as low as the throat, but never from the abysses of the heart. They are of the stony ground order, and have no depth of earth; the hard, barren rock is barely concealed by a sprinkling of soil. They may accurately be styled externalists, for they have the notion that when they have attended to the outside of godliness the whole matter is fully discharged. For instance, if they sing with their voice, they conclude that they have praised God, and that when the hymn is all uttered to melodious notes worship has been presented to God, even though the heart has never praised him at all. When they bow the head and close their eyes in public prayer, they consider they are doing something very right and proper, though very likely they are thinking of their farm, their garden, their children, or their home, casting up their accounts, and wondering how they will find trade and the money-market on Monday when they get to their shops. The externalists are satisfied with the shell of religion whether life remains therein or no; they have a form of godliness, but they are strangers to its power. If they read a chapter every day, they feel very self-complacent, and think they are searchers of the word, though they have never entered into the inner sense, but merely allowed the eye to run over the verses and lines. If they never get an answer to prayer, they feel quite satisfied because they have duly said their prayers. Like boys who give runaway knocks, they have no expectation of an answer. They merely give God the husks, and they think he never looks to see if there is a kernel there. They give him the outward sign, and imagine that he is satisfied, though the thing meant is absent. Oh, how large a proportion of our fellow-creatures seem to be content when they have rendered an outward obedience to religious requirements! They are content to have made clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but the washing of the inside, the new heart, the truth in the inward parts, the giving of the heart's love to Jesus, does not seem to be worthy of their attention; and if we talk of it, they are weary of it, and think we are Puritanical, and imagine that we mean to judge them after a too lofty standard. We are too severe with them, they say; but oh! beloved, it is not so. Does not every thoughtful man see that without the heart religion must be vain? What can there be in mere external forms? Put it to yourselves—what can there be? What do you think yourselves of your children if you see them doing what you bid them, but doing so because they must, but not from an obedient spirit, or because they love you? What would you think of them if they had no trust in you, no confidence in their father's love and in their mother's care, but just went about the house mechanically doing what you bade them, and no more? You would feel you wanted your children's love, you must have their hearts. And God, our Father, thinks the same of us, and if we do not love him, whatever we may do we cannot be acceptable with him. Perhaps you have attended regularly at the church or meeting-house almost ever since you were born, and it is possible that you have gone through all the rites and ceremonies of the community to which you belong; I am not about to condemn you for so doing if you are a Churchman, or if you are a

Methodist, or if you are a Presbyterian, any more than I will if you are a Baptist, only I will put the whole together and say, "God abhors the sacrifice where the heart is not found, and if you have brought him nothing but these externals the verdict of truth concerning your religion is just this—'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.'" If you say "Lord, Lord," you must yield a hearty obedience to Jesus, and make your inner nature to be the temple of his Holy Spirit, or else your hypocrisy will condemn you at the last great day, as one who dared to insult the God of truth with a false profession.

Another class of persons who say "Lord, Lord," and yet are not saved, are those who regard religion as a very excellent thing for quieting their conscience, but who do not look upon it as a practical influence which is to affect their lives and to influence their conduct. I have known persons who certainly would not be easy if they had not gone through their morning and evening prayers, and yet they were bad husbands and quarrelsome neighbours. They could falsify an account, and put down an article twice to a customer without a very great disturbance of their self-satisfaction, but they would not like to have been away from the house of God on the Sabbath, or to have heard an unsound discourse. Either of these things would have touched their conscience, though it was callous on the point of unfair dealing. They could lie, could lie handsomely, but they would not swear, or sing a song; they drew the line somewhere, and compounded for a thousand sins of dishonesty by avoiding certain other vices; thus being left to cheat themselves as a righteous punishment for cheating others. Oh, the deceits and cheats which men play upon themselves! they are their own most easy dupes. A mere matter of religious form will outweigh the most important matters of virtue, when the judgment is perverted by folly. We have heard of the Catholic in Spain who had a very serious sin to confess to his priest. He had been a brigand, and had murdered hundreds, but the sin that lay upon his conscience was not murder. He had perpetrated a thousand robberies, but the sin that troubled him was not theft. Once upon a time, upon a Friday, a drop of blood spurted from a man he had killed, and it had fallen on his lips, so that he had tasted flesh on a Friday, and that had troubled him. His conscience, which, like Achilles, was invulnerable everywhere else, could yet be wounded at the heel. Though we might smile, the same eccentric fact might be declared concerning many beside the brigand. Their eye sees motes and overlooks beams, their judgment strains out gnats and flies, and yet it swallows camels and elephants. They leap one hour and limp another. They are very nice on points of ritual, and equally lax as to common honesty; the thing really worth having—love to God, and love to man—they fling behind their backs, and fancy they shall be saved because they have complimented God by a hypocritical pretence of worship, and have deceived men by sanctimonious pretensions. As though, if I cheated a man every day I could make up for it by taking my hat off in the streets to him. They bow to the Almighty and rebel against him. Do they fancy he is to be cozened by them? Do they dream that he is gratified by their sounding words and empty declarations? Whatever they may imagine, it is not so. Many say "Lord, Lord,"

to quiet their conscience, but enter the kingdom of heaven they never can.

Now, of this class of hypocrites there are many, and there is one I have met with—an old acquaintance of mine—he may be here now. He is a gentleman who is exceedingly orthodox ; I would have you know that he possesses the imperial and infallible standard of orthodoxy. I believe there is a legal pound and a legal yard, kept somewhere in London, to which all measures must conform. This gentleman has got the legal standard of theology in his own possession. He knows exactly what a preacher ought to say upon a text, and it is one of his great delights to sit down and listen to a sermon and say, “ A part of that was right, but it was not all so. It was yea and nay : the preacher gave a pail of good milk and then tipped it over at the close ; he was not sound on such a point, and such a point.” This gentleman can divide a hair betwixt the west and north-west side with extreme accuracy, and never can be wrong under any circumstances. He has infallibility. The truth was born when he was born, and will expire when he expires, he is a paragon of accuracy as to his beliefs, only unfortunately he is not quite so accurate in the daily conduct of his business ; he may be sound in his creed, but he is cracked in his manners. His wife never told me so, but I think if she did speak out her mind she would complain that she has the most crabbed, ill-tempered husband that ever woman was plagued with. His children don’t go to the place of worship where the father goes, because he does not know whether they are elect, and does not trouble himself whether they are so or not, for if they are to be saved they will be saved in God’s own time, and it does not matter whether they go to a place of worship or not. Neither would they like to accompany their father, for they have come to the very natural conclusion that whatever religion their father believes in, they would like to believe the very opposite, for they would like to follow a religion which would make them different from what he is. He is known in the place where he lives as being a man who will walk ten miles to hear some favourite divine, but would not stir a finger to reclaim the sinner or instruct the ignorant ; and he is known for another thing, that, with the exception of his divinity, you cannot believe a word he says. Oh, may God deliver us from these men. There are such to be found in most of our villages. They set themselves up for judges in God’s heritage, and yet they know not what it is to have their nature renewed : in fact, if you were to preach a sermon to them upon, “ Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,” they would try to pump the meaning out of it, and put another sense upon it instead ; they would say that practical godliness is legality, and that the children of God are not to be talked to in that fashion. They imagine that they may live as they like, and yet be the dear people of God. Beloved, may God save us from this spirit of Antinomianism ! for of all the devils that have ever come up from hell, I believe it is one of the most brazen-faced and deceitful, and has done more damage among professors than almost any other. They say, “ Lord, Lord,” but they shall not enter into the kingdom.

We have also met with others who say, “ Lord, Lord,” but not in sincerity. They are very busy professors, always ready to do anything, and they are not happy unless they have something to do. I blame

them not for being busy : I would to God that the sincere people were half as busy ; but I detect in them this vice : they are fondest of doing that which will be most seen ; they prefer to serve God in those places where the most honour will be gained. To speak in public is infinitely preferable to them to the visitation of a poor sick woman. To work or to give where the deed will be blazoned abroad is after their minds. To take the chair at a public meeting, and receive a vote of thanks, is delightful to them ; but to go into a back street and look after the poor, or plod on in the Sunday School in some inferior class, is not according to their taste. It may seem harsh, but it is nevertheless true that many are serving themselves under the pretence of serving Christ, they labour to advance the cause in order that they may be themselves advanced ; and they push themselves forward in the church this way and that way for the glory of place and position, that everybody may say, "What a good man that is, and how much influence he has, and how well he serves his Master !" Beloved, if you and I do anything nominally for God, and at the bottom we are doing it for the sake of praise, it is not for God ; we are doing it for ourselves. I do not say there is anybody here of that sort, but I would like your conscience to ask you, as my conscience is asking me, "Do I really serve the Lord, or do I work in the church in order that I may be considered to be an industrious, praiseworthy minister, seeking the good of my fellow-men ?" I charge you before God, shun the desire of human praise and never let it pollute your motives. May the Holy Ghost purify you from so base a motive. The praise of God—to have it said by him, "Well done, good and faithful servant"—that you should seek ; but honour from men, avoid it as you would a viper. Shake it off into the fire, if ever you find the desire of it clinging to your soul, else it may be your unhappy lot to find at last that saying, "Lord, Lord," will not secure you an entrance into the kingdom.

In all churches I fear there are some of another class of hypocrites, who say "Lord, Lord," for the sake of what they can get by it. John Bunyan speaks of Mr. Byends, who had many motives for going on pilgrimage besides going to the Celestial City. He came from the town of Fairspeech, and there he had a large circle of interesting relatives. Mr. Smoothtongue, Mr. Doublemind, and Mr. Facing-both-ways, who made all his money as a waterman, by looking one way and pulling the other. Many of his race still survive in all circles, gentlemen who hold with the hare and run with the hounds, especially running with the hounds if the hare is likely to be caught. They believe that if gain is not godliness, godliness may be made helpful to gain. These gentlemen flourish in all quarters of town and country. One of them set up in a village, and the first question he asked before he opened his shop was, "Which is the most respectable congregation in the neighbourhood," his object being to go there, that he might not only get good, but dispose of his goods as well. We meet with persons in another rank in life whose object in attending a place is that they may get into a respectable circle, and have wealthy friends, and have their hand upon the door-handle of society. Swimming with the stream is their delight, and they prefer that stream in which there are the most gold fish. Others who are poorer have a keen eye to the

loaves and fishes, and those churches are best where the loaves are not made with barley, as they used to be, but with white flour, and are not mere penny loaves, but good substantial quarterns. They are pleased also if the fishes are larger than those we read of in the New Testament. One of these loathsome hypocrites came to Rowland Hill, and was soon detected by that shrewd divine. "Well," he said, "and so you profess to have been converted?" "Yes," said the old lady, "I was converted under your blessed ministry." "And where have you attended since that time?" "Sir, I have always attended your blessed ministry." "And I hope you have been comforted and built up?" "Yes, I have, very much, under your blessed ministry." "I suppose you know some of the rich people who attend with us." "Yes, I have been kindly noticed by many who sit under your blessed ministry." Mr. Hill then said, "I suppose you have heard that we have some blessed almshouses?" "Yes," she said, "she had, and she hoped she might have the blessed privilege of dwelling in one of them." Alas, alas! the blessed almshouses and the other blessed charities, which indeed are blessed if given from pure motives, have often been perverted to most accursed ends, and "Lord, Lord," has been said with importunity by some whose sole object for saying it was that they might gain pence thereby. In whatever station of life you may be, I beseech you, scorn this meanness. Many a member of Parliament is as mean as any man in this respect. He pretends to be zealous for religion in order to gain a seat in the House. Everywhere there is too much of making religion a stalking-horse by which lower ends may be reached. If you wish to be rich and opulent, go and get a ladder from anywhere except from Calvary; put not the cross to so mean a use. If you take the wounds and blood of Jesus and the Saviour's precious name, and conjure by them, what can come upon you but an angry blast from Almighty God? How can he bear such hypocrisy? And yet many will say "Lord, Lord," for this reason, and will never enter into the kingdom.

Well, the list is sorrowfully long, but I must mention one or two others. One is the Sunday Christian. I dare say he is here now. He is an excellent Christian on the Sabbath. As soon as the sun shines upon the earth on the first day of the week, all his religion is awake, but, alas, he is a very queer Christian on a Monday, and a remarkably bad Christian on Saturday nights. Many people keep their piety folded up and put away with their best clothes, and they only give it an airing on the Sabbath. Their Bible is to be seen under their arm on Sunday, but on a Monday, where is that Bible? Well, not at the man's right hand, as a perpetual companion. Where are the precepts of Scripture? Are they in the shop? Are they in the house? Alas, the golden rule has been left in church to lie dusty in the pews until next Sunday. Religion is not wanted by some people on a week-day, it might be inconvenient. Many there be who sing psalms of praise to God but confine their praises to the congregation; as to praising him in their heart at home, it never occurs to them. Their whole religion lies inside the meeting-house walls, or comes up at certain times and seasons during the day, when the family is called in to prayer. May God save us from intermittent religion! May he grant

us grace to be always what we should wish to be if we were about to die. May religion never be to us a coat or a cloak to be taken off, but may it be intermingled with the warp and woof of our nature, so that we do not so much talk religion as breathe and live it. I desire to eat and drink and sleep eternal life, as an old divine used to say. May that be ours. Good John Newton used to say of his Calvinism, that he did not preach it in masses of dry doctrine like pieces of lump sugar, but that it was stirred up in all his preaching, like sugar dissolved in our tea. Oh, that some of those people who keep lumps of religion for Sundays would sweeten their lives and tempers with it, till men could see that their ordinary every-day actions were full of the grace of God, and that they were actuated at all times by the love of the Most High. God save us from being Sunday Christians!

I will not continue the list, as our time is almost fled. There are many more varieties of vain professors, even as of unclean beasts there are many kinds. May we not be among them!

III. WHERE DID THESE PEOPLE FAIL? That is the last point. The Saviour said that they *did* not his sayings. "He that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven," says he, "shall enter the kingdom." What is the will, then, of his Father in heaven? We are expressly told that this is the will of him that sent Christ, that whosoever seeth the Son and believeth on him should not perish. It is a part, then, of the will of God, which we must do if we would be saved, that we believe on Jesus Christ. Dear hearer, hast thou believed in Jesus? If not, thy sacraments, thy church-goings, thy chapel-goings, thy prayers and hymns, all go for nothing. If thou dost not trust in Jesus, thou hast not even the foundation stone of salvation; thou art lost; and may God have mercy upon thee!

It is a part of God's will, moreover, that where there is faith there should be obedience to God, conformity to the divine precepts. In fact, true faith in Jesus always brings this. There never was a man that believed in Jesus yet but what he sought to do the will of Jesus. Now it is a part of the will of Jesus that all those who are his should love one another. Hypocrites do not love one another; though they are always talking about the want of love there is in the church. Listen to them! They are always denouncing other people, and this is no mark of love to the brethren. They have a keen eye for the imperfections of others, but they have no love to those they censure. We must love the brethren, or we lack the plainest and most needful evidence of salvation, "for we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

The true child of God, also, adds to his faith, love, and faith begets in him all the graces and virtues which adorn renewed manhood and bring glory to God. Alas! I have known some high professors, not commonly truthful, who would talk about communion with Christ and sweet enjoyments of divine love, and yet they seemed to miscalculate the multiplication table, and did not know how many pounds went to a hundredweight. How dwells the love of God in a man who is a thief? How can it be that he is a servant of a just and holy God, when he is unjust in his dealings toward his fellow-men? It will not

do, sir. You may prate as long as you will, but you are no Christian unless the rule of integrity is the rule of your life.

Ay, and there are some who are unchaste, and yet dare to talk about being Christians. My eye might at this moment glance upon some who make this Tabernacle their place of pretended worship, and profess to hear the words we speak with pleasure, who are a disgrace to Christianity all the time. Let them get home to their knees and pray God to give them manliness enough at least to be damned honestly, and not to go down to perdition wearing the name of Christian when Christians they are not. If I served Satan, and loved the pleasures of sin, I would do so out-and-out like a man; but to sneak into the church of God, and to live unchastely—I have no words sufficiently strong with which to denounce such detestable meanness.

Alas, I must add that there are some professed Christians who are not sober. If a man is not temperate in meats and drinks how dare he talk about the power of prayer? How dare he come to the prayer-meeting and open his mouth there? Do you suppose that Christ has any communion with Bacchus, that he will strike hands across the ale house bar, and call him a friend who staggers out of the door of the gin palace to go and listen to a sermon? "Is that ever done?" says one. Done? Ay, let some here confess that they have done it this very day! How dare they say, "Lord, Lord," and yet drain the drunkard's bowl in secret? O sirs, I don't want to put any of these cases in such a way that you should be vexed and angry, and say, "He is personal;" but if you did say so I should not apologise, but should tell you that so long as you are personal in your offence to Christ I shall be personal in my rebukes. If you are personally insulting to the Saviour, you must expect the Saviour's servant to be personal in upbraiding you.

Once more, I fear there are in these days a large number of professors who never exercise real private prayer. The Saviour says he will say to them, "I never knew you;" now he would have known them if they had been accustomed to converse with him in private prayer. Had they communed with him in earnest supplications, the Lord Jesus could not then have said, "I never knew you," for they would each one have replied, "Not know me, Lord! I have wept before thee in secret, when no other eye saw me but thine. I brought thee habitually my daily cares, and cast my burden upon thee. Dost not thou know me? I have spoken to thee face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend. I know *thee*, O my Lord, by joyous experience of thy goodness, and therefore I am sure thou knowest me. Thine answers to my prayers and thy gifts of grace have been so constant that I am sure thou knowest me. Who is there on earth thou dost know if thou dost not know me?" Happy is the man who can speak thus; but alas, many are quite unable to make such a reply. I fear there are some professors now before me who do not pray. You were baptised, and yet you do not pray. You have joined the church, and yet you restrain prayer. You dare come to the communion table, although for a long time you have lived without prayer, for I cannot call *that* prayer which you slobber over in the way you do with your morning prayer when you are in a hurry, and your evening prayer, when you are almost asleep.

God bless you, beloved, and save you from sham praying and make you to have truth in your inward parts, and cause you to be sincere before the living God.

Now, I know what will happen. Some dear trembling heart will say, "I always thought I was a hypocrite; now I know I am. I have always been fretting and troubling about that." It generally falls out contrary to our desire, those who are not hypocrites think they are, while real hypocrites throw off our warnings as an ironclad man-of-war casts off the shots of an ordinary gun. I try to make caps to fit heads which deserve to be covered, but the people whose heads they will fit never put them on; and others for whom they were never intended at all—dear, loving, tender-hearted believers, always watchful and careful—are the very ones who will put them on their own heads, and cry "Yes, I fear I am the hypocrite." Ah, dear soul, do not write bitter things against yourself, because, if you will consider the matter, you will soon see that you are no hypocrite. Would you do anything to grieve Christ? Do you not, above all things, desire to trust him? Do you know anybody to trust in but Jesus? Are you not depending upon him? And though you could not say you would die for him, yet I believe, if it came to the point, that your trembling faith would still keep alive, when that of some of the boastful ones, who, in their own esteem, are almost perfect, would give way, and end in apostasy.

To each one I would say, if thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ with all thy heart, thou art no hypocrite; and if any one of you has been a hypocrite, and has to plead guilty to many things I have mentioned, come to the foot of the cross and say, "Jesus, Master, I the chief of sinners am, have mercy upon me now. Look on me, and let my sins pass away. Look on me, and let all cunning, and hypocrisy be driven far from me. Give me a new heart and a right spirit, and from this day make me thy child, and I will glorify thee, both on earth and in heaven, for ever and ever."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew vii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—643, 640, 637.

BELoved FRIENDS,—This is the last sermon to be issued in my absence. I hope to present you next week with a discourse preached on my return. I have been very ill during my absence in foreign lands; but I hope the result will be that on recommencing my work I shall be both physically and mentally all the more fitted for it, and I pray that to these blessings spiritual energy may be added by the abiding power of the Holy Ghost. It is a period of revival: may the Lord revive his work in each of us. I entreat the prayers of my readers and of my beloved flock. Grace, mercy, and peace be with you all. Amen.

Mentone, Feb. 12, 1874.

C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

COUNTING THE COST.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 22ND, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish."—Luke xiv. 28—30.

THIS passage is peculiar to Luke, and he tells us that at the time when our Lord uttered it great multitudes followed him. It is observable that when our Lord was forsaken by the crowd he was not depressed, and when his ministry became popular he was not elated. He was calm and wise in the midst of the excitement of the thronging multitudes. This passage is sufficient evidence of that fact. On this occasion our Lord spoke with a view to the winnowing of the great heap of nominal discipleship which lay before him, that the chaff might be driven away and only the precious corn might remain. The discourse before us reminds us of Gideon's process of diminishing that vast but motley host of which the Lord said, "The people are too many for me." After having bidden the faint-hearted go, he next brought down the remaining thousands to the river, and bade them drink; and then only kept for himself those who lapped in a certain peculiar manner, which indicated their zeal, their speed, their energy, and their experience. Our Lord tested his followers that he might have only those remaining who would be fit for the conquest of the world. To carry his precious treasure he would select vessels whom grace had made fit for his use, the rest he could dispense with.

Our Lord Jesus was far too wise to pride himself upon the number of his converts; he cared rather for quality than quantity. He rejoiced over one sinner that repented, but ten thousand sinners who merely professed to have repented would have given him no joy whatever. His heart longed after the real, he loathed the counterfeit; he panted after the substance, and the shadow could not content him. His fan was in his hand with which to thoroughly purge his floor, and his axe was

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laid to the root of the trees to hew down the fruitless. He was anxious to leave a living church like good seed-corn in the land, as free as possible from all admixture. Hence in this particular instance one might even think that he was repelling men rather than attracting them to his leadership; but, indeed, he was doing nothing of the kind. He understood right well that men to be truly won must be won by truth, that the truest love is ever honest, and that the best disciple is not he who joins the class of the great Master in a hurry, and the afterwards discovers that the learning is not such as he expected, but one who comes sighing after just such knowledge as the teacher is prepared to give. Moreover, our Lord knew what sometimes we may forget—that there is no heartbreak in the world to the godly worker like that which comes of disappointed hopes, when those who have said, “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest,” turn back unto perdition, and when the hot breath which shouted “Hosanna!” turns into the cruel, cold-blooded cry, “Crucify him! crucify him!” Nothing is more injurious to a church than a large dilution with half-hearted members, and nothing more dangerous to the persons themselves than to allow them to put on an untrue profession. Therefore did the Master take most care at the time when that care was most needed, that none should follow him under misapprehension, but should be made fully aware of what was meant by being his disciples, so that they should not say afterwards, “We have been misled; we have been beguiled into a service which disappoints us.” Unlike the enlisting sergeant, who sets forth all the glories of military service in glowing colours in order to gain a recruit, the great Captain of our salvation would have his followers take all things into consideration before they cast in their lot with him.

This morning our text may be equally suitable, and its warning may be as necessary and as salutary as when first the Master pronounced it for great multitudes are just now following Christ, a revival has come and stirred the mass of you. Among the would-be disciples (blessed be God!) are many whom the Lord himself has called, for every one of whom we give most hearty thanks; but with them necessarily, and of course (for when was it ever different?) there are others who are not called of God at all, but who are moved by the natural impulse of imitating others, and stirred by feelings which are none the less fleeting because just now they are intense; and therefore in Christ's name it is ours to address you even as he did, and warn you in his own words: “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build, and was not able to finish.’”

To assist our memories, we will divide our meditation into three parts. The first will be headed in this manner: *true religion is a costly thing*; the second shall bear this motto: *Wisdom suggests that before we*

enter upon it we should estimate the cost; and the third shall bear this inscription : Cost what it may, it is worth what it costs.

I. First, then, it is clear from our text that TRUE RELIGION IS COSTLY. Far be it from us to create any confusion of thought here. The gifts of God's grace cost us nothing, neither could his salvation be purchased with money, nor with merit, nor by vows and penances. "If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be condemned." The gospel motto is, "without money and without price"; we are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." Yet, for all that, if a man will be a Christian it will cost him something. Consider a moment. Here is a blind man sitting by the wayside begging; he asks to have his eyes opened. Will it cost him anything? No, the Saviour would not accept all the gold in the world for the cure, he will freely open his eyes; but when they are opened it will cost that blind man something. Obtaining his sight he will be called upon to discharge the duties of one who has eyes. He will not be allowed after that to sit there and beg, or, if he tries to do so, he will lose the sympathy which is bestowed upon blindness; now that his eyes are opened he must use them, and earn his own bread. It will cost him something, for he will now be conscious of the darkness of the night which he knew nothing of before! and there are sad sights which now he must look upon which never grieved him before, for often what the eye does not see the heart does not rue. A man cannot gain a faculty except at some expense; he that increaseth knowledge or the means of gaining it, increaseth both sorrow and duty. Take another case. A poor man is suddenly made a prince: it will cost him the giving up of his former manners, and will involve him in new duties and cares. A man is set on the road to heaven as a pilgrim: does he pay anything to enter by the wicket-gate? I trow not; free grace admits him to the sacred way. But when that man is put on the road to heaven it will cost him something. It will cost him earnestness to knock at the wicket-gate, and sweat wherewith to climb the Hill Difficulty, it will cost him tears to find his roll again when he has lost it in the harbour of ease, it will cost him great care in going down the Valley of Humiliation, it will cost him resistance unto blood when he stands foot to foot with Apollyon in conflict, it will cost him many fears when he has to traverse the Valley of the Shadow of Death, it may cost him his life when he comes to Vanity Fair, if like Faithful he is called to bear testimony at the stake. True religion is the gift of God, and there is nothing we can do to purchase it; at the same time if we receive it certain consequences will flow from it, and we ought to consider whether we shall be able to put up with them.

You may be sure that the cost must be great, since our Lord compares it to the building of a tower. The word here used for "tower" has often been employed to signify a turreted house, a villa, or country mansion. "Which of you," says he to the people, "intending to build for himself a mansion in which to reside at your ease would not first of all count the cost?" The building is to be a costly one. Doddridge is wrong in the supposition that a temporary tower is here intended. That it would cost a considerable sum is clear from the Saviour's

saying that the wise man sits down and counts the cost. He does not merely stand up and pass his hand over his brow, and say, "This tower will cost me so many hundred pounds," but it is to be an elaborate construction, an almost palatial edifice, and therefore he sits down like a merchant at his desk, and thoughtfully considers the undertaking; he consults the architect and the mason, and calculates what will be the expense of the outer walls, what of the roof, what of the interior fittings, and the like, and he does not make a rough guess, but counts the cost as men count their gold. It is evidently a matter of consequence with him, and so is true religion—it is no trifle, but an all-important business. He who thinks that a careless, hit-or-miss, headlong venture will suffice for his eternal interests is the reverse of wise.

True godliness is the building up of a character which will endure the day of judgment. It begins in laying deep the foundations in faith and love and a renewed heart; it is carried on by the putting patiently and carefully, and often painfully, stone upon stone the materials of the fair edifice, diligently adding "to your faith courage, and to courage knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." Our life-work consists in "building up ourselves in our most holy faith." See ye not that it is a glorious palace to which the Christian character is likened?

But, lest we should still think the expense small, our Lord compares it to a war, and he speaks of the number of troops engaged in that war, showing that it is no petty skirmish of two insignificant tribes; he likens it to a war in which upon one side there is an array of ten thousand, and on the other a host of twenty thousand. Now, warfare is always expensive work; besides the cost for accoutrements and ammunition, there is the cost of human life and blood, there is the removal of strong arms from work at home, and the direr risks of defeat, captivity, and devastation. The Lord compares religion, then, in its externals, to a battle between the gracious man and the evils rampant in the outside world. The disciple of Jesus has to defend himself against a gigantic foe, and he has within himself a power which, so far as he is concerned, is not sufficient for the contest; the odds are fearful—ten thousand against twenty thousand. Well does the Saviour say in the latter case that it is well to sit down to consult. The king with the smaller army consults, asks his sage senators, takes counsel from experience, calls in good advisers, and debates whether the thing can be done or not. So should we consider the matter of our souls, for religion is a costly thing, and not to be entered on, as the Frenchman said, "with a light heart." That light heart cost his nation dear, and so it will ourselves if we indulge it.

We might have inferred this, I think, from some other considerations—namely, first from the fact that true religion is a lasting thing. It lasts for life. False religion comes and goes; true regeneration is never repented, and it is the commencement of a life which will know no end, either in time or in eternity. Now anything which is to last must be expensive. You shall get your glass coloured, if you will, cheaply, but the sun will soon remove all its beauty. If you would obtain a glass which shall retain its colour for centuries every single

step in the process of its manufacture will be costly, involving much labour and great care. So is it with true religion. You may get it cheap if you will, it will look quite as well as the real thing, and for a little while it will bring you almost all the comfort and respect which the genuine article would have brought you ; but it will not last ; soon will its colour fly, and the beauty and the excellence, which were there but in pretence, will soon have gone. You want, dear friend, (I am sure you do), you want a godliness which will last you till you die : well, then, it must cost you something, be you sure of that.

Remember also that true religion will have to bear a strain, for it is certain to be opposed. This tower will not be built without opposition. It is like the wall of Jerusalem, Sanballat and Tobias will be sure to hinder the building. True religion must be able to endure hardness : if it cannot do that it is good for nothing. The old Toledo blade cost the warrior much at first hand, but when he had once procured it he knew that it would cut through joint and marrow in the day of battle, and he was not afraid to dash into the thick of the fray, trusting to its unrivalled temper and keen edge. Could he not find a cheaper sword ? I ween he could have found it easily enough, and with small expense of gold, but then in the moment when his sword smote upon his enemy's helmet, instead of cleaving through the skull, it snapped in the warrior's hand and cost him his life. Such is the cheap religion with which so many take up ; there is no self-denial in it, no forsaking of the world, no giving up of carnal amusements—they are just the same as the world ; their religion costs them nothing, and at last when they want it it will fail them, it will snap like the ill-made sword in the day of battle, and leave them defenceless. Oh, if you want that which will endure the conflict you must spend cost upon it. Jesus Christ knew that the persons to whom he spoke would not be able to bear the tests which awaited his disciples ; they did not know that he would be crucified, for just then he was popular, and they hoped that he was to be the King of Israel, but the Saviour knew that there would come dark days in which the King of the Jews would be hanged upon a gibbet, and his disciples, even his true ones, would forsake him for the moment and would flee ; and therefore he in effect said to them, " You must be prepared for cross-bearing, you must be prepared to follow me amid derision and shame and reproach, and if you are not ready for this your discipleship is a mistake. In their case it did not stand the test, these people were nowhere when the time of trial came.

And remember, dear friends, and I dwell with great emphasis upon this point, we want a religion which will abide the inspection of the great Judge at the last day. Now, there are things in the world which will endure for awhile, but if they are closely looked at, and especially if they are placed under a microscope, they will be seen to have many flaws : now, no microscopical examination can for a moment be compared with the glance of Jehovah, he will read us through and through. Oh, what a withering will there be for fair professions in the day when his fiery eye shall gaze upon them. Never does the grass dry up under the sirocco one-half so swiftly as the fair plains of pretended Christianity will wither beneath the divine glance in the last

tremendous day. He will look upon what men call Christendom, and it will almost if not altogether vanish; for "when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith upon the earth?" Will it not, then, be evidently true that "many are called, and but few are chosen"? "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," is still the voice of Christ to all of us, "for many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able." If our religion is to be weighed in the balances, and may perchance be found wanting, it is well for us to see to it, and to know that it must be sincere, genuine, and costly, if it is to pass that ordeal.

What, then, is the expense? What is the cost of building this tower or fighting this war? The answer is given by our Saviour, not by me. I should not have dared to invent such tests as he has ordained; it is for me to be the echo of his voice and no more. What does he say? Why, first, that if you would be his, and have his salvation, you must love him beyond every other person in this world. Is not that the meaning of this expression, "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother"? Dear names! Dear names! "Father and mother!" Lives there a man with soul so dead that he can pronounce either of these words without emotion, and especially the last—"mother"? Men and brethren, this is a dear and tender name to us, it touches a chord which thrills our being; yet far more powerful is the name of Saviour, the name of Jesus. Less loved must father and mother be than Jesus Christ. The Lord demands precedence also of the best beloved "wife." Here he touches another set of heart-strings. Dear is that word "wife," partner of our being, comfort of our sorrow, delight of our eyes—"wife!" Yet, wife, thou must not take the chief place, thou must sit at Jesus' feet, or else thou art an idol, and Jesus will not brook thy rivalry. And "children," the dear babes that nestle in the bosom, and clamber to the knee and pronounce the parent's name in accents of music, they must not be our chief love, they must not come in between us and the Saviour, nor for their sakes, to give them pleasure or to promote their worldly advantage, must we grieve our Lord. Many a child is master of his father, many a daughter has been mistress to the mother; but if it be for evil, this must be ended at once. If they tempt us to evil they must be treated as if we hated them; yea, the evil in them must be hated for Christ's sake. If ye be Christ's disciples your Lord must be first, then mother, father, wife, children, brethren, and sisters will follow in due rank and order.

I am afraid that many professors are not prepared for this. They would be Christians if their family would approve, but they must consult their brother, father, or wife. They would make a stand against worldly pleasures if others would, but they cannot bear to appear singular, or to oppose the views of relatives. They say, "My father wishes it, and I dare not tell him that it is wrong." "My mother says that we must not be too strait-laced, and therefore, though my conscience tells me it is wrong, yet will I do it;" or else they say, "My girls are growing up and must have amusement, and my boys must be allowed their pleasures, and therefore I must wink at sin." Ah, my brethren, this must not be, if you are indeed Christ's disciples. You must put them all aside, the dearest must go sooner than Jesus be

forsaken; for does he not say in the Psalms, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him"? Mark you, you will best prove your love to your relatives by being decided for the right, since you will be the more likely to win their souls. Love them too much to indulge the wrong in them; love them so truly that you hate that in them which would injure you and ruin them. You must be prepared to suffer from those who are bound to you by the dearest ties; sin must not be tolerated whatever may happen. We cannot yield in the point of sin, our determination is invincible; come hate or come love, we must follow Christ.

The next item of cost is this—self must be hated. I am afraid there are some who would sooner hate father or wife than hate their own life. Yet such is the demand. It means this: that wherein my own pleasure, or my own gain, or my own repute, or even my own life shall come in the way of Christ's glory, I am so little to make any account of myself, that I must even hate myself if self shall stand in the way of Christ. I am to look upon father, mother, brother, sister, and myself also, as foes, so far as they are opposed to the Lord Jesus and his holy will. I am to love them and desire their good as I also desire good for myself, but I am not to desire any good for them or for myself at the cost of sinning, and robbing the Lord Jesus of his glory. As for myself, if I see anything in myself opposed to Jesus I must away with it. I must mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts, denying myself anything and everything which would grieve the Saviour, or would prevent my realising perfect conformity to him.

Next, the Saviour goes on to say that if we would follow him we must bear our cross: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." Sometimes that cross comes in the shape of confessing our faith before gainsayers. "Ah," says the timid heart, "if I do so I shall have all my friends against me." Take up your cross! it is a part of the cost of true discipleship. "I shall scarcely be able to bear myself in the house if I avow my religion." Take up your cross! my brother, or you cannot be Christ's disciple. "Well, but it will involve a change even in my daily life." Make the change, my brother, or you cannot be the Lord's disciple. "But I know there is one very dear whom I have looked upon as likely to be my future companion, and he will leave me if I forsake the ways of the world." Then, heavy as the loss may be, let him go, if it be so that you cannot follow Christ and unite with him; for Jesus you must follow, or be lost for ever. What trying words these are! What detectors of the hypocrisy of many professing Christians! Did they ever separate from the world? No, not they; they fall in with its fashions as the dead fish floats with the current. Have they any cross to bear? Does anybody reproach them with being too rigid, and too puritanical? Oh, no! for theirs is the religion which the world praises, and consequently the religion which God abhors. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him, and he who has the smile of the ungodly must look for the frown of God.

But, more than this, the Saviour, as another item of cost, requires

that his disciple should take up his cross, and *come after him*: this is to say, he must act as Christ acted. If we are not prepared to make Christ our example, yea, if it be not our highest ambition to live as he lived, to give ourselves up to act as he did, we cannot be his disciples.

Last of all, we must make an unreserved surrender of all to Jesus. Listen to these words: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." It may yet come to this that persecution may arise, and you may have actually to give up all. You must be prepared for the event. You may not have to give up anything, but the surrender must be just as real in your heart as if it had to be carried out in act and deed. No man has truly given himself to Christ unless he has also said, "My Lord, I give to thee this day my body, my soul, my powers, my talents, my goods, my house, my children, and all that I have. Henceforth I will hold them at thy will, as a steward under thee. Thine they are—as for me, I have nothing, I have surrendered all to thee." You cannot be Christ's disciples at any less expense than this: if you possess a farthing that is your own and not your Master's, Christ is not your Master. It must be all his, every single jot and tittle, and your life also, or you cannot be his.

These are very searching words, but I would remind you once again that they are none of mine. If in expounding them I have erred, I am grieved that it should be so, but I am persuaded I have not erred on the side of too great severity. I confess I may have spoken too leniently. The words of the text lay the axe to the root, and are sweeping to the last degree. Oh, count ye, then, the cost! and if any of you have taken up a religion which costs you nothing, put it down and flee from it, for it will be your curse and your ruin.

Is there any getting to heaven without this cost? No. But may we not be Christians without these sacrifices? You may be counterfeits, you may be hypocrites, you may be brethren of Judas, but you cannot be real Christians. This cost is unavoidable, it cannot be bated one solitary mite. God grant you may be enabled to submit to it.

II. The second head is this, WISDOM SUGGESTS THAT WE SHOULD COUNT THE COST. You feel you would like to be a Christian. Dear friend, give me thy hand. I am glad thou hast such a liking. But as I grasp thy hand and would fain draw thee towards Christ, I look thee in the face and say, "Dost thou know what thou desirest? Art thou sure thou desirest it? There are men lying on beds of sickness who cry for help, but when they recover and have to go out and battle with the world, the time may come when they will say, 'I would as leave be on the bed of sickness again.' I should not like a time to come when any one of you shall say, 'I joined the church, but it was a mistake. I did not weigh the matter rightly. I am now in for it, and I am sorry I am, for I ought not to be where I am.' If honest, you ought to give up your profession, if such is the case. If you have no grace, I hope you will have enough of common honesty not to stick to a practical falsehood. I should grieve indeed if that should happen, and therefore this morning, I pray you, count the cost. For mark, if you do not count the cost, you will not be able to carry out your resolves. It is a great building, it is a great war. No mistake can be greater than the notion

that in order to be saved there is only needed a measure of emotion during a few days, and the belief of some one decisive hour. If I preached such doctrines I should be deceiving your souls. Faith and repentance are not the work of a week or two, they are a life-work; as long as the Christian is on earth he must repent; and as for faith, it is not saying "I believe in Jesus, and therefore I am saved," but it is a daily grace, the trust of a lifetime; the Christian continues still to believe and repent until he commences to triumph in eternal glory. Moreover, faith is continually productive of sanctifying results upon the life of the believer, or otherwise he is not possessed of the right faith. He who believes in Jesus Christ is saved; but if there were such a thing as a temporary faith there would be such a thing as a temporary salvation. He who truly repents of sin is a renewed man, but if repentance of sin were only a transient thing, and were soon over, the life which it indicated would be over too. You must not be content with false and fleeting religion. You are beginning to build a tower of which the topstone will never be laid till you are taken up to heaven, and you are commencing a war which will never end till you exchange the sword for the palm branch.

Remember, also, that to fail in this great enterprise will involve terrible defeat, for what says our Lord? He says that not to be able to finish will expose you to ridicule. I beg you to notice the form of that ridicule. "All that pass by will begin to mock him, saying one to another (for that is the force of the expression) this man began to build but was not able to finish." Our Lord does not represent them as saying to the foolish builder, "You began to build and were not able to finish," but as speaking about him as a third person—"This man." Now, half-hearted Christians, half-hearted religious men, may not be scoffed at in the public streets to their faces, but they are common butts of ridicule behind their backs. You false professors are universally despised. Worldlings laughingly say, "Ah, these are pretty specimens of church members!" The world looks upon a worldly church with utter disdain, and for my part little do I regret that such derision is poured upon an object which so well deserves it. To be a mere pretender to Christian discipleship is to become an object of scorn in time and in eternity, and such will be the false professor's fate. Sir, if you mean to be a Christian, resolve that it shall be the right thing, thorough and decided; for then though men will not go about and praise you to your face, they will honour you, and even those who hate you will know your value; but if you are only half a Christian, and not thorough, they may not come to your face and show their contempt, but as they pass by they will sneer, and will have more respect for a downright worldling than for you, because he is what he says he is, and makes no pretence of being anything else, but as for you, you began to build and could not finish. What a wretched object is a sham Christian! We have sometimes seen great buildings which have been commenced and deserted by over speculative persons, and the neighbours have called them "Smith's Folly," or "Brown's Folly," or "Robinson's Folly," or the like; these are but fleeting causes of derision; but the pretender, the man who in appearance commenced to be a Christian and then broke down at it,

will be pointed at even by the lost in hell. The drunkard will cry, "And you? Have you also come hither? you who were so eloquent about sobriety, and so ready to rebuke the tippler." "Aha!" cries another, "you are the man who lived down our street, and made so much show of your religion; you told me I was very wicked, but what are you better off than I am?" Behold, I see the openly profane upraise themselves from their racks of remorse to exclaim, "Art thou become like one of us? Thou church-member, art thou in hell? Is the taste of the sacramental wine upon thy lips still? Wherefore, then, dost thou demand a drop of water to cool thy tongue? That sacramental bread which thou didst swallow so readily, does it not even now stick in thy hypocritical throat? Thou liar before God and man, meet and right is it that thou art cast out even as we." Oh, if you must be lost, be lost as anything but hypocrites; if you must perish, perish rather outside the church than in it. Do not ape the Lord of glory! I know of no worse act than to mimic the excellences of the Saviour with pert imitation of his graces. What worse offence can you render to the majesty of his sacred virtue than to travesty his holiness and ape his perfection?

III. The last word shall be this, that **COST WHATEVER IT MAY, TRUE RELIGION IS WORTH THE COST.** We are like a man with the black pest upon him who knows that he is dying, and yet yonder is a drug which will heal him. "Physician," says he, "you ask so great a price that each drop costs me a diamond; you are demanding more than its weight in choicest pearls, but it does not matter, I must have it. If I do not I am a dead man, and then what will it profit me that I have kept my gold?" It is the case of every one of us here present, we must have Christ or perish for ever, and it will be better for us to cut off our right arm and to pluck out our right eye than that we should be cast into hell fire.

Mark you, brethren, the present blessings of true religion are worth all the cost. What if I have to rend some fond connection? Jesus, thou art better to me than husband, wife, or child. If it must be so that she who lies in my bosom shall count me for her enemy thou shalt be in my heart, my Saviour, better than a Rachel, or a Rebekah. Yes, if it must be so that the father shall say, "You shall never darken my doors again if you follow Christ," he must say it, for when father and mother forsake me the Lord will take me up. The immediate joy will recompense for the immediate loss, yea, doubtless you may count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord, and yet remain a gainer.

And again, what recompense comes for all cost in the consolation afforded by true godliness in the article of death? To lie a-dying, why it will give no pain to be able to say then, "I was cast out of my family for Jesus." It will be no sorrow to remember, "I was ridiculed for Christ." It will cause us no pangs to say, "I was counted too precise and too much of a Puritan." No, my brethren, these are not the things which put thorns into death pillows. Oh, no! there we shall see how sweet it was to have borne any part of Jesus' cross; a silver of his cross will be worth a king's ransom on a dying day. ~~However~~ at the judgment, when the trumpet rings out, and the dead

are rising, we shall not say, "I suffered too much for Christ." When to the right his chosen go, and we among them, we shall not look back with regret to the fact that we lost caste in society and position amongst the refined for Jesus' sake. We shall not lament that we attended a despised conventicle, and worshipped among the poor of this world out of love to Jesus, and fidelity to his gospel. Oh, no! I warrant you in that day he shall shine brightest who was most beclouded for his Lord's sake. Midst the bright ones, doubly bright shall be the martyr band of whom the world was not worthy, who were accounted as the offscouring of all things; and while each one of the disciples shall receive a hundredfold for all he may have given up for his Lord's cause, these shall have the fairest portion.

Moreover, let me remind you, beloved, that Christ asks you to give up nothing that will injure you. If you must hate father and mother it is only in this sense, that you will not yield to their wrong requests, nor will you leave Christ for them. If you must give up any pleasure it is because it is not a fitting pleasure for you, it is poisonous sugar of lead, and not true sweetness. Christ will give you greater enjoyments by far.

Moreover, I remember that our Redeemer does not ask any one of us to do what he has not done himself. That thought pierces me to the quick, I wish it might affect you also. Master, dost thou say, give up father? Didst thou not leave thy Father? Dost thou bid me even leave my father's house if it must be for thy sake? Didst thou not leave the glorious mansions of heaven? What if I be called to bear reproach? They called the Master of the house Beelzebub. What if I be cast out? They also cast thee out. When we think of the scourgings, and the shame, and the spitting which the Lord endured, what are our griefs? And if for his sake we should even be condemned to death we know how he hung on the cross, stripped of his all, that he might save us from the wrath to come. O believer, can you follow your Lord whithersoever he goeth? Soldiers of the cross, can you follow him? Is the path smooth enough for those dear feet and too rough for you? There is he in the centre of the battle where the blows fall fastest, will you follow him? Dare you follow him, or do you pine for the tents of ease, and the soft couches of the cowards yonder who are shrinking back, and deserting to the enemy? Oh, by everything that is good, if you be indeed his followers, I charge you cry, "Where he is, there let his servant be, as he fares so let his servant fare; in this world be ours his humiliation that in the world to come we may be partakers of his glory."

This is strong preaching, you tell me, but the Saviour meant all that I have said. His was a testing discourse, but there are truths to be remembered which may console us while hearing them. It is true that *you* cannot build the tower; Joshua said to the people in his time, "Ye cannot serve the Lord." If you have counted the cost, you know by this time that you cannot wage the war. Ten thousand cannot stand against twenty thousand. But yet it must be done, inevitable necessity drives on behind; whatever may be in front, we dare not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. What, then, must we do? Hear ye the Lord's words, "With men it is impossible, but with God all

things are possible." Are you willing? Then the Spirit of God will help you. You shall give up the world and the flesh without a sign; you shall fight against your lusts and you shall overcome them through the blood of the Lamb. The tower shall be built and the Lord shall inhabit it. Cast yourselves on Jesus by a simple faith: rest in his power, and from day to day believe in his strength, and he will be with you safely through.

Do you notice the verse which follows this passage? I wonder whether anything like it will follow my sermon. It is astonishing though Jesus thundered out as from the top of Sinai, and his words seemed harsh, yet it is written, "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him," as if they said to themselves "This man tells us the truth, therefore we will hear him." And then he began to tell them the precious truths of his free grace, acting just as the husbandman does who puts in the plough and turns up the soil; and when he sees the clods breaking in the furrow he scatters the golden seed, but not till then. Ho, every one of you who would have Christ, come, and have him! You who would have salvation, accept it as the gift of his sovereign grace; but do not receive it under misapprehension; understand what is meant by it. Salvation is not deliverance from hell alone; it is deliverance from sin. It is not the rescue of men from eternal pain merely; it is the redemption from this world's vain and wicked ways. It cannot be divided, it is a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout. If you would have justification, you must have sanctification; if you would have pardon, you must have holiness; if you would be one with Christ, you must be separate from sinners. If you would walk the streets of gold above, you must walk the road of holiness below. God grant you his Holy Spirit to enable you so to do, and his shall be to praise for ever. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm ciii.;
Luke xiv. 25—35.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—906, 671, 596.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE ENTREATY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 1ST, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."—Hebrews iii. 7.

THE peculiar circumstances in which we are now placed as a congregation demand of me that my discourses should be principally directed to the unconverted, that the awakened may be decided, that those may be aroused who as yet remain unmoved, and that a desire to seek the Lord may spread all around us. We may leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness for a little while just now, and go after that which has gone astray. It is our duty usually to feed the children, but for a while we may leave that to other agencies, and hand out food to those who are perishing of hunger. These seasons of revival do not last for ever, they come and they go; and, therefore, they must be improved while they are with us. The husbandman tells us that he must make hay while the sun shines, and we also must attend in the season to the labour which it suggests, and that duty seems to me to look in the direction of the undecided. While God is speaking so mightily, we should plead with men to hear his voice. Clearly, it is our wisdom to say "Amen" to what the Lord is saying; for as his word cannot return unto him void, ours will be sure to be fruitful when it tallies with the Lord's. Therefore the subject of my sermon this morning shall be that of our hymn-writer:—

"Hear God while he speaks,' then hear him to-day;
And pray while he hears, unceasingly pray.
Believe in his promise, rely on his word,
And while he commands you, obey your great Lord."

I have taken this text with the earnest hope that God may bless it,
No. 1,160.

and I look to the Lord's people to baptise the text in floods of anxious tears for the unsaved.

I. The first point which it presents for serious consideration is this—**THE SPECIAL VOICE OF THE HOLY GHOST.** "*As the Holy Ghost saith, 'To-day if ye will hear his voice.'*" The apostle is continually quoting from the Old Testament, but he does not often present his quotations in this peculiar fashion. In the very next chapter, when he is speaking of the same passage, he uses the expression, "*Saying in David*"—mentioning the human author of the psalm; but in this case, to give full emphasis to the truth, he quotes the divine author alone—"As the Holy Ghost saith." These words, it is true, are applicable to every passage of sacred Scripture, for we may say of all the inspired books—"As the Holy Ghost saith;" but it is designedly used here that the passage may have the greater weight with us. The Holy Ghost, in fact, not only speaks thus in the ninety-fifth psalm, but it is his unvarying utterance. The Holy Ghost *saith*, or continues still to say, "*Hear ye his voice to-day.*" He has a certain doctrine upon one occasion, and a still deeper truth at another period, according as there was need, or as his people were prepared for it; but this particular utterance is for all time and for every day of grace. The Holy Ghost by Paul, as aforetime by David, saith "*To-day;*" yea that is the burden which he lays upon his ministering servants still, in every place they entreat and persuade men, saying, "*To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.*"

How does the Holy Ghost thus speak? He saith this first, *in the Scriptures.* Every command of Scripture calls for immediate obedience. The law of God is not given to us to be laid by upon the shelf to be obeyed at some future period of life, and the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is not so intended for the eleventh hour as to be lightly trifled with during the first ten. Wherever the Holy Ghost exhorts, he speaks in the present tense, and bids us now repent, or now believe, or now seek the Lord. I pray you ever remember whenever you read the Bible, that it is the Spirit of the living God who there admonishes you to immediate obedience. The calls of the inspired word are not those of Moses, or David, or Paul, or Peter, but the solemn utterances of the Holy Ghost speaking through them. With what a dignity does this truth invest Holy Scripture, and with what solemnity does it surround our reading of it! Cavilling at Scripture, trifling with it, disputing its doctrines, or neglecting its admonitions, we grieve the Spirit of God; and this is very dangerous ground to trespass on, for although he is longsuffering and pitiful, yet remember it is of the sin against the Holy Ghost that it is said, "*It shall never be forgiven.*" Not every sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable; God be thanked for that; but still there is a sin against the Holy Spirit which shall never be forgiven: therefore do we tread, I say, on very delicate ground when we vex him, as we do if at any time in reading his word we count his teachings to be light matters. Beware, I say, ye men of England, who have your Bibles in your houses, among whom the word of the Lord is common as wheaten bread, beware how ye treat it; for in rejecting it ye reject not alone the voice of apostles and prophets, but the voice of the Holy Spirit himself. The

Holy Ghost saith, "To-day;" he bids his people make haste, and delay not, to keep the commands of God, and he bids sinners seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. Oh, may you hear his warning voice and live.

Further, while the Holy Ghost speaks in Scripture on this wise, he speaks in the same manner *in the hearts of his people*, for he is a living and active agent, his work is not ended, he speaks and writes still; the pen is still in his hand, not to write with ink upon paper, but upon the fleshy tablets of prepared hearts. Now the Spirit of God has been in this church communicating with his people, and the tenor of the communication has been this—"Seek to win souls;" and I will warrant this assertion, that in no case has the Spirit said, "Seek the conversion of sinners at the end of the year: awake to earnestness about their souls when you have become more mature in years and judgment;" but every man and woman here saved by grace, who has felt the Holy Spirit within him, has felt an impulse to seek the conversion of sinners at once. He has felt a longing that they should no longer abide in sin, that they should now be aroused, should immediately lay hold of eternal life, and find instantaneous peace in Christ. I appeal to my brethren if it be not so. Have you not felt "it is high time to awake out of sleep"? Have you not felt the force of the admonition, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might?" At other times we have been satisfied to feel that there was a good work going on secretly, that the soil was being prepared for future harvests, that somehow or other God's word would not return unto him void; but we are not so readily contented now. We feel as if we must during each service see the Lord at work, and we plead for immediate conversions. We are as eager for souls as misers are for money. I say not that all of you feel this, but I say that all who have been fully influenced by the Holy Spirit during this period of gracious visitation, have been filled with agony for the immediate salvation of souls. Like unto a woman in travail they have longed eagerly to hear the cry of new-born souls. Their prayer has been, "To-day, good Lord, answer our entreaties, and lead our fellow-men to hear thy voice that they may be saved." I appeal to the people of God whether the Holy Spirit when he stirs them up to soul-winning does not say, "To-day—to-day seek the salvation of men."

The like is also true when the Holy Ghost speaks *in the awakened*. They are not yet numbered with the people of God, but they are under concern of soul, and I shall make my appeal to them also. You are now conscious that you have offended your God: you are alarmed to find yourselves in a condition of alienation from him; you want to be reconciled, and you pine for the assurance that you are really forgiven. Do you wish to wait for that assurance till six or seven years have passed away? Do you feel this morning that you could be perfectly satisfied to go out of this house in the state you are now in, and continue in it month by month? If such delay would satisfy you, the Spirit of God has not spoken with you in an effectual manner. You have been but partially influenced, like unhappy Felix, and having said, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for thee," we shall hear no more of you. If the Spirit of God be upon you, you are crying "Help, Lord, help

me now ; save me now or I perish. Make haste to deliver me, make no tarrying, O my God. Haste on wings of love to pluck me from the pit of destruction which yawns beneath my feet."

"Come, Lord, thy fainting servant cheer,
Nor let thy chariot wheels delay ;
Appear, in my poor heart appear,
My God, my Saviour, come away !"

Everywhere a truly awakened sinner pleads in the present tense, and cries mightily for a present salvation, and it is certain that whenever the Holy Ghost strives with men, he urgently cries, "To-day ! to-day !"

Once more, the Holy Ghost speaks thus *by his deeds* as well as by his words. We have a common proverb that actions speak more loudly than words. Now the acts of the Holy Spirit in the leading of many in this place to the Saviour are so many practical invitations, encouragements, and commands to others. The gate of mercy stands open every day in the year, and its very openness is an invitation and a command to enter ; but when I see my fellow-men go streaming through, when I see hundreds finding Christ as we have seen them, do not all these as they enter the portal of grace, call to others to come also ? Do they not say, "This way may be trodden by such as you are, for we are treading it ; this way assuredly leads to peace, for we have found rest therein." It is surely so. This way of speaking from the Holy Ghost has come very closely home to some of you, for you have seen your children enter the kingdom, and yet you are not saved yourselves. Some of you have seen your sisters saved, but you remain unconverted still. There is a husband yonder whose wife has told him with sparkling eyes of the rest she has found in the Saviour, but he himself refuses to seek the Lord. There are parents here who have found Jesus, but their children are a heavy burden to them, for their hearts are unrenewed. Did I see my brother pass the gate of salvation ? May I not take that as an intimation from God's Spirit that he is waiting to be gracious to me also ? When I see others saved by faith, may I not be sure that faith will also save me ? Since I perceive that there is grace in Christ for the sins of others exactly like myself, may I not hope that there is mercy also for me ? I will venture to hope and dare to believe. Should not that be the resolve of each, and is not that the point to which the Holy Spirit would lead us ? Is not the bringing of one sinner to himself intended to allure others ?

"The Holy Ghost saith, To-day." But why so urgent, blessed Spirit, why so urgent ? It is because the Holy Ghost is in sympathy with God ; in sympathy with the Father who longs to press the prodigal to his bosom ; in sympathy with the Son who is watching to see of the travail of his soul. The Holy Ghost is urgent because he is grieved with sin, and would not see it continued for an hour, and every moment that a sinner refuses to come to Christ is a moment spent in sin ; yea, that refusal to come is in itself the most wanton and cruel of offences. The hardness of man's heart against the gospel is the most grievous of all provocations ; therefore does the Holy Spirit long to see man rid of it, that he may yield himself to the omnipotent power of love. The Holy Ghost desires to see men attentive to the voice of God because he

delights in that which is right and good. It is to him a personal pleasure. He is glad to behold his own work in the sinner carried on till salvation is secure. Besides, he waits to execute his favourite office of a Comforter, and he cannot comfort an ungodly soul, he cannot comfort those who harden their hearts. Comfort for unbelievers would be their destruction. As he delights to be the Comforter, and has been sent forth from the Father to act specially in that capacity, that he may comfort the people of God, he watches with longing eyes for broken hearts and contrite spirits, that he may apply the balm of Gilead and heal their wounds. Therefore "the Holy Ghost saith, To-day." I leave this fact with you. The special voice of the text is not of man, but of the Holy Spirit himself. He that hath ears to hear let him hear.

"Then while 'tis call'd to-day,
Oh, hear the gospel sound;
Come, sinner, haste, oh, haste away,
While pardon may be found."

II. The text inculcates A SPECIAL DUTY. The duty is that we should hear the voice of God. If you so read it, the text bids us hear the voice of the Father saying, "Return unto me, ye backsliding children. Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool;" or it may be the voice of Jesus Christ, for it is of him that the apostle is here speaking. It is Jesus who calls, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In fact, the voice to be heard is that of the Sacred Trinity, for with the Father and the Son, the Spirit also saith, "Come." We are bidden to hear, and that surely is no hard duty. The grand evangelical precept is, "Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live;" for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Hear ye, then, the Lord's voice. "Well," saith one, "we do hear it; we read the Bible, and whatever is preached on the Sabbath-day we are willing enough to hear." Ah, my dear hearers, but there is hearing and hearing. Many have ears to hear, but they do not hear in reality. The kind of hearing which is demanded of us is the hearing with reverence. The gospel is God's word, not man's, the voice of your Maker, your Lord; the voice of infallible Truth, of infinite Love, of sovereign authority, and therefore no common attention should be bestowed upon it. Listen to it devoutly, summoning all your powers to adoring attention. Angels veil their faces in Jehovah's presence, and shall man trifle before him? When God speaks do not regard it as the voice of a king merely, to whose message it might be treason to turn a deaf ear, but as the voice of your God, towards whom it is blasphemy to be inattentive. Hear him earnestly, with anxiety to know the meaning of what he says, drinking in his doctrine, receiving with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your soul, bowing your understanding to it, longing to comprehend it, desirous to be influenced by it. "Hear his voice"—that is, hear it obediently, eager to do what he bids you, as he enables you. Do not hear and forget, as one that looks in a glass and sees his face, and afterwards forgets what manner of man he is. Retain the truth in your memories,

and, better still, practise it in your lives. To hear in this case is, in fact, to yield yourselves to the will of God, to let yourselves be as the plastic clay and his word as the hand which moulds you, or your heart as the molten metal, and the word as the mould into which you are delivered.

Hear ye the Lord when he *instructs* you. Be willing to know the truth. How often are men's ears stopped up with the wax of prejudice, so that they are dull of hearing. They have made up their minds as to what the gospel ought to be, and will not hear what it is. They think themselves the judges of God's word, instead of God's word being their judge. Some men do not want to know too much, they might be uncomfortable in their sins if they did; and, therefore, they are not anxious to be instructed. When men are afraid of truth there is abundant reason to fear that the truth is against them. It is one of the worst signs of a fallen condition when a son of Adam hides away from the voice of his Creator. But, O dear hearers, to-day hear ye his voice. Learn of Jesus, sit as scholars at his feet, for "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Hear him as scholars hear their teacher, for all the children of Zion are taught of the Lord. But the Lord does more than instruct you, he *commands*; for let men say what they will, the gospel to be preached to the ungodly is not merely warnings and teachings, it has its solemn, positive commands. Listen to this. "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." As to faith, the Lord's word does not come as a mere recommendation of its virtues, or as a promise to those who exercise it, but it speaks on this wise, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned": the Lord puts the solemn sanction of a threatening of condemnation upon the command to show that it is not to be trifled with. "All power," says Christ, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth," and therefore clothed with that authority and that power, he sends out his disciples, saying to them, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The word goes forth with divine authority, saying, "Repent ye and believe the gospel." This is as much God's command as that which saith, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart," and there is this much the more of solemn obligation, that whereas the law was given by Moses, the gospel command was given by the Son of God himself. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God!" Hear ye then the commands of Jesus, for be ye sure of this, that his gospel comes to you with the imperial authority of the Lord of all.

But the Lord does more than command, he graciously *invites*; with tenderness he bids sinners come to his banquet of mercy, for all things are ready. As though he pleaded with men, and would fain persuade where he might command, he cries, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and ye that have no money, come buy wine and milk without money and without price." Many of the Lord's

invitations are remarkable for their extreme pathos, as though it were rather himself that would suffer than the sinner, if the sinner remained obstinate. He cries, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Like a father pleading with a beloved but disobedient son who is ruining himself, God himself pleads, as if the tears stood in his eyes; yea, the Incarnate God in very deed wept over sinners, and cried, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Will you not listen, then, when God *instructs*? Shall he give light and your eyes be closed? Will you not obey when God *commands*? Intend ye to be rebels against him? Will ye turn your backs when God *invites*? Shall his love be slighted, and his bounty treated with scorn? God grant it may not be so. The good Spirit asks no more than is just and right when he cries, "Hear ye the voice of the Lord."

But the Lord does more than invite, *he adds his promises*. He says, "Hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." He has told us that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Glorious promises are there in his word, exceeding great and precious. Oh, do not, I beseech you, count yourselves unworthy of them, for if so, your blood be on your own heads.

The Lord also *threatens* as well as entreats. He warns you, "If ye turn not, he will whet his sword: he hath bent his bow and made it ready." He declares that the despisers shall wonder and perish. He asks, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" He says, "The wicked shall be cast into hell with all the nations that forget God." Though he hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto him and live, yet he will by no means clear the guilty, but every transgression and iniquity shall have its just recompense of reward. If Christ be rejected, eternal wrath is certain. By that door ye enter heaven, but if ye pass it by, even he who at this hour stands with pierced hands to woo you will at the last great day come with iron rod to break you. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." I leave those thoughts with you. May God grant they may make impressions where his will designs they should.

III. There is in our text A SPECIAL TIME EMPHASISED. "The Holy Ghost saith, *To-day*." To-day is the set time for hearing God's voice. To-day, that is *while God speaks*. Oh, if we were as we should be, the moment God said "Seek ye my face," we should reply, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek:" as soon as the invitations of mercy were heard there would be an echo in our souls to them, and we should say, "Behold we come unto thee that we may be saved." Observe how in creation God's voice was heard instant. The Lord said, "Let there be light, and there was light." He said, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature," and straightway it was so. There were no delays. God's fiat was immediately executed. Oh, ye whom God has made men, and endowed with reason, shall the insensible earth be more obedient than you? Shall the waves of the sea swarm

with fish, and the earth teem with grass so soon as Jehovah speaks, and will you sleep on when the heavenly voice cries, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life." Hear God to-day, for to-day he speaks.

The apostle says in the next chapter, "To-day—*after so long a time* and I will dwell upon that word—"after so long a time." I see that some of you have bald heads, or grey hairs lie thick upon them. If you are unconverted well may the Holy Ghost say, "To-day, after so long a time, hear ye his voice." Is it not long enough to have provoked your God these sixty years? Man, are not seventy years of age enough? Peradventure you have almost fulfilled your fourscore years and still you hold out against the overtures of divine mercy. Is not a graceless old age a standing provocation of the Lord? How long intend ye to provoke him? How long will it be ere you believe him? You have had time enough to have found out that sin is folly, and that the pleasures thereof are vanity. Surely you have had time enough to see that if there be peace it is not to be found in the ways of sin. How long intend ye to linger on forbidden and dangerous ground? You may not have another day, O aged man, which to consider your ways! O aged woman, you may not have another year granted you in which to provoke your God. "After so long a time," with sacred pressure would I urge you—"To-day, if ye will hear his voice." I hope it is not I only now pleading with you but I trust the Holy Ghost also saith in your conscience, "To-day attend the voice of God."

"To-day," that is, especially *while the Holy Ghost is leading others to hear and to find mercy*; to-day, while the showers are falling; to-day, receive ye the drops of grace; to-day, while there are prayers offered up for you; to-day, while the hearts of the godly are earnest about you; to-day, while the footstool of heaven's throne is wet with the tears of those who love you; to-day, lest lethargy should seize the church again; to-day, lest the preaching of the word of God should come to be a matter of routine, and the preacher himself, discouraged, should lose all zeal for your soul; to-day, while everything is peculiarly propitious to hear ye the voice of God. While the wind blows, hoist the sail; while God is abroad on errands of love, go forth to meet him. To-day, while yet you are not utterly hardened, while still there is a conscience left within you; to-day, while yet you are conscious of your danger in some degree, while yet there is a lingering look towards your Father's house, hear ye and live; lest, slighting your present tenderness, it should never come again, but you should be abandoned to the shocking indifference which is the prelude of eternal death. To-day, young people, while ye are undefiled with the grosser vices; to-day, ye young men who are new to this polluting city, ere yet you have steeped yourselves in its streams of lust; to-day, while everything is helpful to you, hear ye the loving, tender, wooing voice of Jesus, and harden not your hearts.

To me the text seems wonderfully gospel-like when it says "To-day," for what is it but another way of putting the doctrine of the blessed hymn,

"Just as I am, without one plea?"

"To-day"—that is, in the circumstances, sins and miseries in which

you now are—hear the gospel, and obey it. To-day, since it finds you in yonder pew, hear God's voice of mercy in that pew. To-day, you who have never been concerned before, while God speaks, let it concern you. "Ah," you say, "if I were living in another house." You are called to-day, if you are living with the worst of sinners. "I will hearken when I have enjoyed that sinful pleasure which I promised to myself next Wednesday." Ah, if it be a sinful one, flee from it, or it may make a turning point in your history, and seal your soul's ruin. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice." "Ah, if I had attended a few more revival meetings, and felt in a better state, I would obey." It is not so written, sinner; it is not so. I am not told to preach the gospel to those of you who are ready to receive it, and say, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, if he be already in a measure prepared to believe." No, but to every creature here I have the same message to deliver. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, who is also God Almighty at the right hand of the Father, believe ye in him and ye shall live; for his message to you is for to-day, and admits of no delay. "But I must reform, I must amend, and then will I think about believing." That is to put the effect before the cause. If ye will hear his voice, the reforming and the amending shall come to you, but you must not begin with them as the first matter. The voice of God does not say that, but it says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." Oh, hear ye that voice.

I must occupy a moment in showing you why the Lord in mercy says "To-day." Do you not know that other people die? Why may you not die yourself? During these present services several have been taken from among us. I was surprised when I came home to find how many have died of late concerning whom I should have predicted a much longer life. Why may you not die speedily? "I am robust and healthy," says one. If you ever hear of a sudden death, does it not generally happen to the robust? It seems as if the storm swept over the sickly, and they bowed before it like reeds, and so escaped its fury, while the vigorous in health, like powerful forest trees, resist the storm, and are torn up by it. How often does sudden death come just where we least expected it. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice." I will put a question to you which that holy man, Mr. Payson, puts to the awakened. He says, How would you like to arrange that you would find Christ at the end of the year, and that your existence should depend upon the life of another person? Select the strongest man you know, and suppose that everything in reference to your eternal welfare is to depend upon whether he lives to see the next year. With what anxiety would you hear of his illness, how concerned you would be about his health! Well, sinner, your salvation is risked by you upon your own life, is that any more secure? If you are procrastinating and putting off repentance, why should you be any more secure about your own life than you would be if all depended upon the life of another? Be not such fools as to trifle yourselves into your graves, and trifle your souls into hell. You would not stake your fortune on the cast of the dice, as the mad gambler does, and yet you are staking your soul's eternity upon what is quite as uncertain, for you do not know when you fall asleep to-night whether you shall awake to-morrow in your

bed or in hell. You do not know that the next breath you are expecting will ever come, and if it do not come you will be driven for ever from God's presence. Oh, sirs, if you want to play at hazards, hazard your gold, or hazard your reputations, but do not jeopardise your souls. The stakes are too heavy for any but those who are made mad by sin. Risk not your souls, I do conjure you, upon the hazard of your living another day, but listen to the voice of God to-day.

IV. I have little time for my last point, but still I must have space for it even if I detain you beyond the accustomed time of departure. The last point is this,—The **SPECIAL DANGER** which is indicated in the text. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, *harden not your hearts.*" That is the special danger. And how is it incurred? When persons are under concern of soul their heart is in a measure softened, but they can readily harden it, first, by willingly *relapsing into their former indifference*, by shaking off all fear, and saying in wilful rebellion, "No, I will have none of it." I once preached in a certain city, and I was the guest of a gentleman who treated me with great kindness, but I noticed on the third occasion of my preaching that he suddenly left the room. One of my friends followed him out of the place and said to him, "Why have you left the service?" "Well," said he, "I believe I should have been converted altogether if I had stopped any longer, for I felt such an influence coming over me; but it would not pay; you know what I am, it would not pay." Many persons are of that kind. They are shaped for a while according to the earnest word they hear, but it is all in vain; the dog returns to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. This is to harden your heart and provoke the Lord.

A common way of provoking God and hardening the heart is that indicated by the context. "Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness"—that is to say, by *unbelief*, by saying, "God cannot save me, he is not able to forgive me; the blood of Christ cannot cleanse me; I am too black a sinner for God's mercy to deal with." That is a copy of what the Israelites said:—"God cannot take us into Canaan; he cannot conquer the sons of Anak." Though you may look upon unbelief as a slight sin, it is the sin of sins. May the Holy Ghost convince you of it, for "when the Spirit of truth is come he shall convince the world of sin," and especially of sin, "because they believe not on Jesus." "He that believeth not is condemned already," saith Christ, "because he hath not believed on the Son of God;" as if all other sins were inconsiderable in power to condemn in comparison with this sin of unbelief. Oh, do not, therefore, doubt my Lord. Come, thou blackest, filthiest sinner out of hell, Jesus can cleanse thee. Come, thou granite-hearted sinner, thou whose affections are frozen like an iceberg, so that no one melting tear of penitence distils from thine eye, Jesus' love can soften thy heart. Believe him, believe him, or else thou hardenest thy heart against him.

Some harden their hearts by *asking for more signs*. This also is after the manner of the Israelites. "God has given us manna; can he give us water? He has given us water out of the rock, can he give us *also*? Can he furnish a table in the wilderness?" After all

that God had done, they wanted him to work more miracles, or they would not believe. Let none of us harden our hearts in that way. God has already wrought for men a miracle which transcends all others, and is indeed the compendium of all wonders; he has given his own Son out of his bosom to be a man, and to die for sinners. The sinner who is not contented with that display of the mercy of God will never be satisfied with any proof of it. Christ on the tree is instead of all miracles under the gospel dispensation; if you will not believe God who "so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," then you never will believe. "Oh, but I want to feel; I want the influence that is abroad to come upon me in a strange manner; I want to dream at night, or to see visions by day." Do you? You are hardening your heart; you are rejecting what God does give, and asking him to play the lackey to you, and to give you what your petulant pride demands. If you had these things you would not believe any the more. He who has Moses and the prophets and rejects them, would not believe even though one came to him from the dead. Christ on the cross is before you, do not reject him. For if you do, nothing else can convince you, and there must you remain, hardening your heart in unbelief.

Those also harden their hearts who *presume upon the mercy of God*, and say, "Well, we can turn when we please." Ah, how different will you find it. "We have only to believe and be saved." Yes, but you will find "only believing" to be a very different thing from what you imagine. Salvation is no child's play, believe me. I have heard of one who woke up one morning and found himself famous, but you will not find salvation in that way. "He that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

You harden your hearts if you *plunge into worldly pleasures*; if you allow loose companions to talk with you; if on this holy day you indulge in idle talk, or listen to unhallowed mirth. Many a tender conscience is hardened by the company which surrounds it. A young woman hears a powerful sermon, and God is blessing it to her, but she goes off to-morrow to spend the evening in a scene of gaiety: how can she expect that the word of God will be blessed to her? It is a deliberate quenching of the Spirit, and I wonder not that God should swear in his wrath that those who do so shall not enter into his rest. Oh, do not these things, lest ye harden your hearts against God.

Now, I must conclude, but I must put the matter fully before you. I want every sinner here to know his position this morning. God commands all men everywhere to repent; Christ commands men to believe in him to-day. One of two things you have to do, you have no other choice,—either you must say that you do not intend to obey God's command, or else you must yield to it. Like Pharaoh, you must say, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" or else, like the prodigal son, you must resolve, "I will arise and go unto my father." There is no other choice. Do not attempt to make excuses for delay. God makes short work with sinners' excuses. Those who were invited to the great supper said, "We are going to our farm and our merchandise; we are about to try our yokes of oxen, or

we have married a wife ;” but all the Lord said about it was, “None of the men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.” There was the end of it. There was a man once who had a talent, and he buried it in a napkin, and said, “I knew that thou wast an austere man,” and so on. What notice did his Master take of that speech? He merely said, “Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, and therefore, for that very reason thou oughtest to have been the more diligent in my service.” The Lord sees through your excuses, therefore do not insult him with them. I have you here this morning before me, and you shall say one thing or the other before the living God, and before Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead. He bids you now turn from your sin and seek his face, and believe in his dear Son; will you do it or not? Yes or no? And mark you, that “Yes” or “No” may be final. This morning the last appeal may have been made to you. God commands, and I charge you, if your heart intends rebellion say, if you dare, “I will not obey,” then you will know where you are, and you will understand your own position. If God be not God, fight it out with him. If you do not believe in him, if he really be not the Lord who made you and who can destroy you, or if you mean to be his enemy, take up the position, and be as honest even if you are as proud as Pharaoh, and say, “I will not obey him.” But, oh, I pray you do not thus rebel. God is gracious; will you be rebellious? God is love; will you therefore be hard-hearted? Jesus by his every wound invites you to come to himself, and the Holy Ghost himself is here, and is saying in the text, “To-day harden not your hearts.” Yield yourselves now to his love

“Who round you now
The bands of a man would cast,
The cords of his love who was given to you
To his altar binding you fast.

At his altar may you be found safe in the day of his appearing. God bless you.

I beg those of you who know how to pray to implore a blessing on this word, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Numbers xiii. 26—33, xiv. 1—23; Psalm xciv.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—95 (Version II.), 497, 546.

Those readers who think this sermon likely to be useful are earnestly requested to give it away, that it may be useful to others. The preacher is most anxious that his message should be scattered broadcast over the land.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

“WITHOUT MONEY AND WITHOUT PRICE.”

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 8TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Without money and without price.”—Isaiah lv. 1.

THE spiritual blessings promised and provided in the gospel comprise all that man can need. They are described in the chapter before us as “*water*,” refreshing and cleansing—the “water of life,” whereof if a man drink he shall never thirst again. They are next described as “*wine*,” the wine of joy, exhilarating, comforting, “making glad the heart of man;” a wine in which is no woe, but fulness of holy delight. These blessings are thirdly represented as “*milk*,” for milk is almost the only article of diet which contains everything that is necessary for the support of man, and therefore it is a type of the satisfying qualities of the gospel. He who receives the gospel of Jesus Christ has all that his soul can possibly need for time and for eternity, so that water, and wine, and milk set forth a full supply of life, and joy, and satisfaction for our spirits.

According to the text, this provision for our souls is presented to us gratis. We are to buy it, that is to say, we are to have it with as good a right, and as full an assurance, as if we had purchased it; but the purchase is to be made “without money,” and lest we should make mistakes and suppose that although money literally might not be brought, some other recompense must be offered to God, it is added, “without price.” The double expression is most sweeping, clearing away once for all from the mercies of God all idea of their being purchasable by any method whatsoever. The gospel is not to be bought with gold. Vain are your treasures if you should lavish them at the

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feet of Christ. What cares he for gold and silver? Neither are they to be procured by knowledge and wisdom, which are the mind's wealth, the money of the soul. A man may know much, but his knowledge may only puff him up, or increase his condemnation. Neither are the gifts of God's grace to be obtained by human merit. Merit, indeed, connected with man is out of the question; call it demerit and you are right. If we had done all that we ought to have done, still we ought to have done it, and even in that case we should still be unprofitable servants. Away with the notion of merit as possible to fallen man. The day which saw Adam driven out of Paradise blotted the word "human merit" out of the dictionary of truth. Every sort of gift to God with the view of procuring his favour is excluded by the term, "without price." Some have dreamed that they might make a barter if they could not purchase; they, therefore, bring to God instead of inward holiness the beauty of outward ceremonies; and instead of a perfect righteousness they offer a baptismal regeneration and a sacramental sanctity. If they have not kept the law, yet at any rate they have observed the rubric; if they have not loved their God with all their heart, they have at least bowed the knee during the performance of a priest. Thus would they barter with the Lord, and give him rites and ceremonies in payment for his grace. They conceive that a kind of witchcraft rests in the use of certain words and postures, and that God is thereby moved to blot out their sins. Others, who are not quite so insane, have fallen into the same error under another form; they fancy that a certain amount of feeling will procure for them the gifts of grace; they must be distressed up to a certain point, and made to tremble in a certain measure, and become despairing, or ever they can hope for mercy: thus they make unbelief, which is a sin, into a preparation for grace, and despair, which is an insult to a merciful God, they magnify into a fitness for the reception of his bounty. Others, again, have dreamed that partial reformation, the saying of prayers, the leaving of legacies, attendance upon orthodox teaching, or the performance of benevolent actions, will surely procure for them the gifts of grace. To one and all of them comes this gospel declaration, the gifts of God's love are "without money and without price." I wish I knew how to put this truth into such words that everybody could understand me, and that nobody could misunderstand me. Whenever a man is saved he is saved because God freely saves him, not because there was anything in him to deserve salvation, or any particular fitness in him why God should deliver him and not another. The gifts of God's grace are absolutely free in the most unrestricted sense of that term. Nothing good whatsoever is brought by man, or is expected from man, by way of recommendation to mercy; but everything is given gratis, and is received by us "without money and without price." Upon that one thought I shall dwell, hoping that the Spirit of God will make it plain to your minds.

I. And, first, I shall notice THE SURPRISING NATURE OF THIS FACT, for it is very surprising to mankind to hear that salvation is "without money and without price." It is so surprising to them that the plainest terms cannot make them understand it; and, though you tell them a thousand times a day, yet they persist in thinking that you mean some-

thing else. They cannot be brought to accept it as literally true that they are to have everything for nothing, salvation gratis, and eternal life as the pure gift of heaven's charity. Why, there are those sitting in this house this morning who know the way of salvation, and are saved, and they will tell you that for many years they heard the gospel very plainly put, but that until God the Holy Ghost enlightened them they did not really understand what was meant by simple faith in Jesus, and could not bring themselves to the idea that then and there, just as they were, they had but to accept the salvation of God and it would be their own. They were unable to believe that so simple a matter could be the gospel; they looked for mystery, difficulty, and a complex preparation; they understood the words, but missed the central sense; the grace and the freeness of the gospel surpassed their thoughts. It is not an unusual thing to find children of godly parents who have heard the gospel from their earliest youth still ignorant of the way of salvation, having failed to learn this simple truth, that salvation is the free gift of God, and can only be received as such. Now, why is it that man does not see this? Why is it that when he does see it he is surprised at it? I think it is, first, because of *man's relation to God, and his wrong judgment of him*. Man thinks that God is a hard master. That expression of the man who hid his talent in a napkin, "I knew that thou wast an austere man, gathering where thou hast not strawed," is precisely the idea which the mass of mankind have of the Lord; they judge him to be exacting, hard, severe, and that his law claims more of man than it should; they judge that he might have dealt more leniently with a poor, erring, fallible mortal like man. When the Holy Spirit convinces men of sin they still retain hard thoughts of God, and fear that he cannot be so gracious as to blot out their sins. Judging the Lord by their own standard, they cannot think that he will freely forgive, and though they are reminded of the great atonement which enables God to be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly, they still think that because they could not readily forgive offences against themselves, God must be as slow to pardon as they are, and that he must be urgently pleaded with, recompensed with penances, conciliated with promises, or moved by tears, before he will be brought into a loving state of mind so as to be willing to bestow his grace. Little do they know that mighty heart of love which throbs in Jehovah's bosom: little do they understand that his bowels yearn to clasp his Ephraims to his breast, and that he has declared, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Learn ye, then, ye sons of men, that "as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts." He waits to be gracious, and is willing abundantly to pardon the ungodly if they do but turn unto him.

No doubt, also, *the condition of man under the fall* makes it more difficult for him to comprehend that the gifts of God are "without money and without price," for he finds that he is doomed to toil for almost everything he needs. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" is the sentence upon our race. If man wants bread the earth demands that he dig for it, or use some other form of

labour. Under the artificial conditions of civilisation scarcely anything comes to us of itself, but must be bought with money. Man finds that he is in a place where, if he buys, it certainly is not "without money and without price;" money and price must be in his hands in every market and store, or else he must go away empty-handed, and therefore he is apt to reckon that as it is so in this sin-blighted world it must be the same in the kingdom of Christ; and when he finds that he is not by works to purchase divine favour, he counts it strange, and is long in believing that it can be true. He reads the words "without money and without price," and thinks that there must be something written between the lines to modify the sense, for surely there must be something to do or to feel before a sinner can receive the gifts of grace.

Again, man recollects *the general rule of men* towards each other, for in this world what is to be had for nothing except that which is worth nothing? Nothing for nothing is the general system. Nobody in trade thinks of trading except for profit, and if a man were urged to sell without a price he would open wide his eyes, and declare that he would soon find himself a bankrupt. Dealing with our fellow-men we must naturally expect, even according to the golden rule, that we should give them an equivalent for what we receive. Of course the Christian religion lifts true believers into a condition in which they are willing to give, hoping for nothing again, but the general rule all round is you must pay for what you have. Can you clothe yourself? can you warm your hands in the winter? can you find a shelter for your children? can you obtain a bed upon which to lay your weary bones without money? And so "without money and without price" is quite a novelty, and man is astonished at it, and cannot believe it to be true.

Another matter helps man into this difficulty, namely, *his natural pride*. He does not like to be a pauper before God. The mass of mankind have generally some excellency or other which, in their own esteem, exalts them above others. You shall find a large proportion of the upper classes perfectly convinced that they are far superior to the poor, that the working classes are indeed an inferior order of beings compared with themselves. You shall find an equal pride amongst the working classes, which leads them to think themselves the real backbone of the country, a sturdy independence it is sometimes called, but when it intrudes into religion it is nothing better than evil boasting. Pride is woven into man's nature. The prodigal became a prodigal through his love of independence, he desired his own portion of goods to do as he liked with. After he became a prodigal his time was occupied with spending—he spent his money riotously; he loved to play the fine gentleman and spend. Even when the prodigal came to himself the old idea of paying was still in him, and he desired to be a hired servant, so that if he could not pay in money he would pay in labour. We do not like to be saved by charity, and so to have no corner in which to sit and boast. We long to make provision for a little self-congratulation. You insult a moral man if you tell him that he must be saved in the same way as a thief or a murderer, yet this is no more than the truth. For a woman of purity to be told that the same grace which saved a Magdalene is necessary for her salvation is so humbling, that

her indignation is roused; and yet it is the fact, for in every case salvation is "without money and without price."

Once more, *all religions that ever have been in the world of man's making teach that the gifts of God are to be purchased or merited.* Draw a line, and you shall find the gospel on the one side teaches free grace, but the whole ruck of false religions, from Heathenism down through Mahomedanism to Popery, all demand a price for the promise of salvation. The Pharisee reckons that none can have it unless he shall wear a broad phylactery, and fast twice in the week. The heathen will swing with a hook in his back, or roll over and over for hundreds of miles, or torture his body, or make great sacrifices at the altar of his idol. The Mahomedan has his pilgrimages and a host of meritorious prayers. As for the Papist, his religion is merit and payment from beginning to end, not only for the soul while it is yet in the body, but when it is departed; for by means of masses for the dead a tax is still exacted. Man would fain bargain with God, and make God's temple of mercy into an auction-mart, where each man bids as high as he can, and procures salvation if he can reach a certain figure: but here stands the open-handed gospel with all the treasures of infinite grace unlocked, and all the granaries of heaven with the doors taken off their hinges, and it cries, "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely"; it asks neither money nor price, nor anything of man, but magnifies the infinite grace of the all-bounteous Father, in that he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and reveals his grace to the undeserving.

Thus I have spoken upon the surprising nature of this fact, but I want to add that, though I have thus shown grounds for our surprise, yet if men would think a little they might not be quite so unbelievably amazed as they are; for, after all, the best blessings we have come to us freely. What price have you paid for your lives? and yet they are very precious. Skin for skin, yea, all that you have would you give for them. What price do you pay for the air you breathe? What price does a man pay for the blessed sunlight? I wonder they have not a game law to preserve the sunbeams, so that the lords of the land alone might enjoy the genial rays, while the poor should be liable to punishment for poaching in pursuit of sunshine. No, they cannot pen in the sun's light, God has given it freely, and to the pauper it is as free as to the prince. Life and air and light come to us "without money and without price." And our faculties, too—who pays for eyesight? The eye which glances across the landscape and drinks in beauty, what toll does it pay? The ear which hears the song of the birds at dawn, what price is given for it? The senses are freely bestowed on us by God, and so is the sleep which rests them. To-night when we lay down our heads upon our pillows the poor man's sleep shall be as sweet as the sleep of him who reclines on down. Sleep is the unbought boon of heaven, you could not purchase it, all the mines of Potosi could not buy a wink thereof, yet God gives it to the sea-boy on the giddy mast. It is clear then that some of the best blessings we possess come to us by the way of free gift, ay, and come to the undeserving, too, for the dew shall sparkle to-morrow upon the grass in the miser's field, and the rain shall fall in due season upon the rising corn

of the wretch who blasphemes his God. The influences which nurture wheat and barley, and other fruits of the earth, are given to the farm of the atheist as well as to the fields of the godly: they fall alike for the evil and for the good, for "the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." We ought not, therefore, to be so surprised, after all, that the gifts of his grace are free.

II. In the second place, dear friends, I want to show you *THE NECESSITY OF THE FACT* mentioned in our text. There was a *necessity* that the gifts of the gospel should be "without money and without price." A threefold necessity.

First, from *the character of the donor*. It is God that gives. Oh, sirs, would you have him sell his pardons? The King of Kings, would you have him vend forgiveness to the sons of men at so much per head? Would you have him sell his Holy Spirit, and would you come like Simon Magus and offer money unto him for it? Would you have him give to you as the reward of merit adoption into his family, that you might become his sons, and brag even in the halls of heaven that you climbed to this dignity by your own good works? Talk not so exceeding proudly. The great King has made a great supper—would you have him demand a price for entrance, and sit as a receiver at the gates of mercy, and stop each one who comes to see if he has brought a price to pay for entrance there? Nay, nay, it is not like our God. He dealeth not thus. When the prodigal came back, imagine the father keeping his son in quarantine to see if he had a clean bill of health! Imagine him saying, "My son, have you brought a gift wherewith to reconcile me?" The parable would be spoiled by the hint of such a thing. Its glory lies in the freeness of the father's love, which asked no questions, but pressed the repenting child to his bosom just as he was. God, the great Father, must not be so dishonoured in your thoughts as to be conceived of as requiring a price of you. You disappoint him when you think that you are to do something and feel something and bring something in your hand as a recommendation to him. Could you picture Jesus going about Palestine selling his cures; saying to the blind beggar, "How much have you left of the alms of the charitable to give to me for your eyesight?" or saying to Martha and Mary, "Bring me hither all you have, and I will raise your brother Lazarus." Oh, I loathe to speak of it, it makes me sick to imagine such a thing. How weary must the Lord be with your self-righteousness, with your attempts to traffic and to bargain with him! Oh, sirs, you are not dealing with your fellow men, you are dealing with the King of Kings, whose large heart scorns your bribes. Salvation must be given without price, since it is God that gives.

Again, it must be for nothing, because of *the value of the boon*. As one has well said, "it is without price because it is priceless." You could not conceive of a fit price for the blessing, therefore it must be left without price. I will suppose this morning that I am sent here by high authority to sell the Koh-i-noor, or a diamond worth ten thousand times as much, a jewel worth a thousand millions of pounds. I am bound to sell it to you now, but I am sure you cannot purchase it at any price worthy of it: all you could offer would be so small a portion of its value that I would sooner give it away than lower the repute of the jewel by

taking such a trifle for it. The gospel is so precious a thing that if it is to be bought the whole world could not pay for it, and therefore if bought at all it must needs be without money and without price. It cost the Lord Jesus his blood, what have you to offer? What? Do you imagine that you can buy it with a few paltry works? God himself must become a man, and bleed, and die, to bring pardon and eternal life to sinners; and do you think that your tears, and bendings of your knee, and gifts of your money, and emotions of your heart, are to purchase this unpurchasable boon? Oh, believe, because it is so rich, it must be given away if it is to belong to us.

And there is another reason arising from *the extremity of human destitution*. The blessings of grace must be given "without money and without price," for we have no money or price to bring. I was the other night speaking to inquirers, and I put this matter in a very homely way, as I will again. I said, I will suppose there is a terrible famine among you, as there is in India, and that all your money is gone, and that all of you together have not so much as a farthing between you. Now, I am sent with bread, and I want to sell it to you, and I begin by saying, "Well, of course, now that there is a famine we must make a little profit out of you, you must expect the price to be raised; but we will be very moderate, we will let you have it for a shilling a quartern loaf." You say, "We do not find fault with the price, but we have not a farthing to pay you with. Oh, sir, we cannot buy of you." Well, well, we will reduce the price; you shall have it at the ordinary price of household bread! Come, you cannot ask for anything more reasonable than this; will you have it? "It is not unreasonable," you say, "the price is a very proper one, but still it is useless to us. We would gladly purchase, but we have not a penny between us; what can we do?" Come, then, we will reduce the price a great deal; we will let you have the best bread at twopence a quartern. Did you ever hear of bread at that rate? Surely you may fill your children's mouths every day at this price. "Alas," you cry, "it is of no use; we cannot find even twopence." Well, now, we will bring the price down to one farthing a loaf, and who has ever heard of bread at that rate before? Still, with tears in your eyes, you cry to me, "Oh, we can no more get it at a farthing than we could buy it at a shilling, for we have not a single farthing left." Come, then, I must come down to you altogether, you shall have it for nothing. Take it, I say, for nothing, and I will give you a piece into the bargain; I will give you something over and above weight. I see you wonder what I mean by that. Listen to these words: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house*;" there is the piece over and above what you asked or even thought. Is not that good reasoning that God must give eternal life for nothing, because you have nothing which you could offer as a price? If you are to have eternal life, no terms but those of grace will meet your case. Think, dear friends, when the dying thief was hanging at the side of Christ—suppose the Lord Jesus Christ had made a rule that a man should live a holy life for a week, and then should have the blessing. Why, the thief must have died unblest! Suppose that he had said to all men, it is absolutely essential that you join a church and be baptised, for else I

cannot save you, then poor bedridden sinners must perish hopelessly. A gospel all for nothing suited the dying thief. "I admit it," says somebody. Ah, my friend, then surely you cannot be in a worse condition. Some years ago I had a very high compliment paid me by a gentleman who intended an insult. He ridiculed my preaching, and remarked that it would be eminently suited to the lowest class of negroes. This I accepted as an honourable admission, for he who could reach and bless the black man will not preach in vain to white people. I have heard of a preacher of whom his detractors said that he might do very well to preach to old women. Ah, then, he will do for anybody. I suppose he would suit old women because they are on the borders of the grave, and that it is where we all are, for we are all much nearer to the grave than we imagine. Free salvation suits the vilest of the vile, and it is equally suitable for the most moral. If it is all for nothing none can be so poor as to be excluded from hope; if it is to be had "without money and without price" no soul need be without it. Surely the price is brought low enough. The difficulty is that the price is too low for human pride, sinners will not come down to it. Whereas every other salesman finds that he cannot get his customers *up* to his price, my difficulty is that I cannot get my customers *down* to mine; they will still higggle and haggle to do something, be something, or promise something, whereas here are the terms, and the only terms upon which gospel grace is to be had, "without money and without price." Ye shall have it freely, but God will have none of your bargaining. Take mercy, take it just as you are, you are welcome to it; but if you tarry till you are better your very betterness will make you worse; if you wait until you are fit your fancied fitness will be your unfitness. Your hunger is your fitness for food, your nakedness is your fitness for clothing, your poverty is your fitness for the riches of mercy, your sin, your loathsomeness, your hardness of heart and obduracy do but make you fit objects for the wondrous grace, and for the amazing transformation which divine power can work in men.

It is absolutely needful that the blessings of grace should be "without money and without price," and, glory be to God, so they are.

III. My third point is this, THE SALUTARY INFLUENCE OF THIS FACT. If it be "without money and without price," what then? Well, first, *that enables us to preach the gospel to every creature*. Jesus Christ said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." If we had to look for some price in the hand of the creature, or some fitness in the mind of the creature, or some excellence in the life of the creature, we could not preach mercy to every creature, we should have to preach it to prepared creatures, and then that preparation would be the money and the price. I am sorry that some of my brethren entertain the idea that the gospel is to be preached only to certain characters. They dare not preach the gospel to everybody, they try to preach it to the elect; surely, if the Lord meant them to make the selection he would have set a mark upon his chosen. As I do not know the elect, and have no command to confine my preaching to them, but am bidden to preach the gospel to every creature, I am thankful that the gospel is put in such a way

that no creature can be too poor, too wicked, or too vile to receive it, for it is "without money and without price." That is going to the very bottom. Surely, that takes in the most degraded, debased, and despised of our race, whoever they may be. If before I preach the gospel I have to look for a measure of fitness in a man, then I cannot preach the gospel to any but those whom I believe to have the fitness; but if the gospel is to be preached freely, with no conditions or demands for preparations or prerequisites, if this be the gospel that "whosoever believeth in Jesus is not condemned," then may I go to the most degraded Bushmen, or savage Ashantees, or untamable Modocs, and tell them the good news; we may speak of mercy to harlots and thieves, and we may carry the gladsome message into the Guilt Garden, and Hangman's Alley. We may penetrate the jungles of crime, and still with the same entreaty from heaven—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The fact that the mercy of God is "without money and without price" enables us to preach it to every man, woman, and child of woman born.

Now, note secondly, that this fact has the salutary effect of *excluding all pride*. If it be "without money and without price," you rich people have not a halfpennyworth of advantage above the poorest of the poor in this matter. Your station may be very respectable, but God is no respecter of persons. You may be numbered amongst the rank and fashion of society, but in God's esteem one rank is as evil as another, and the fashion of all men passes away. Divine grace comes to the Queen upon her throne and to the beggar in the street with this same message, "without money and without price." So that the pride of wealth is utterly abolished by the gospel; and so is the pride of merit. You have been so good and so charitable, and you are so excellent, and so religious, and so everything that you ought to be, and you fancy that there must be some private entrance, some reserved door, for persons of your quality: but, sirs, the gate is so strait that you must rub shoulders with thieves, and drunkards, and murderers, if you are to enter eternal life; there is but one way and that is the way of grace. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By the law of works? Nay, but by the law of grace." Those who are saved never sing well done to themselves, but when they get to heaven they glorify grace alone.

"Grace all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days,
It lays in heaven the topmost stone;
And well deserves the praise."

What a slap in the face this is for human glorying, and how much it needs it, for it is impudent to the last degree. "Surely, surely you make some distinction, sir, between the excellent and the moral, and those who are openly criminal." Yes, I do make a great distinction when treating of our relations to one another, but we are now speaking of grace, and from the nature of things these distinctions are not available where mercy and not merit is the rule. To all men there is

but one rule—"He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God."

Again, another influence of the fact mentioned in our text is that it *forbids despair*. Despair, where art thou? I have a ten-thonged whip with which to flog thee away! "Without money and without price;" then who can despair? You are feeling in your pocket, and you find nothing there: you do not need anything, salvation is "without money." You have been feeling in your heart, and you find nothing there! You do not need anything before coming to Jesus, for his grace is "without price." You have been looking back on your past history, it is all blank and black. That is true, but Jesus Christ is come into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. But you cannot find a redeeming trait in your character. Ah, but God has found a Redeemer, mighty to save, and if you rest in him he will save you from your sins. Whoever you may be, if eternal life is to be had for nothing, you are not too poor to have it. It is impossible that you can have fallen too low for the gospel, for Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him."

I was for a long while pestered with this idea that I must have some extraordinary vision, or remarkable revelation, or singular experience, and have somewhat to tell, such as I had heard good people tell of; but when the glad tidings were made plain to me by the Holy Spirit, I was as if I had received a new revelation. "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," sounded like a new song in my ears. My heart leaped for joy at the news. Christ was nailed to the cross, and I was to look at him and be saved. Just as the serpent of brass was lifted on the pole and whosoever looked was healed of the serpent bites, so was there for me eternal life and blessedness in looking to Jesus on the tree. Why did I not understand that before? Ah, why! Why do not some of you understand it? I pray God the Holy Spirit make you see it this morning, for that is the great truth which will save your soul. Everything for nothing, and Christ himself to be had for the asking. Surely this truth should comfort the most desponding.

Next it *inspires with gratitude*, and that gratitude becomes the basis of holiness. Look ye here. This man is saved for nothing, his sin pardoned according to the free mercies of God! What do you think he says? "Oh, my God, my God, how have I belied thee! how have I slandered thee! As for thee, thou hast been ever merciful to me. Thou hast blotted out my sins, thou hast made me thy child, thou hast given thy Son to be my Redeemer. My God, I love thee! What can I do to show that my heart is wholly thine?"

"Make me to run in thy commands,
'Tis a delightful road;
Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands
Offend against my God."

They say that a free gospel will make men think lightly of sin. It is the death of sin, it is the life of virtue, it is the motive power of

holiness, and whenever it comes into the soul it begets zeal for the Lord.

"Speak of morality! thou bleeding Lamb,
The best morality is love to thee."

The best morality springs out of gratitude for pardon, and grace, and lively hope, received as the gifts of heaven.

Then note again that the receipt of salvation without money and without price *engenders in the soul the generous virtues*. What do I mean by that? Why the man who is saved for nothing feels first with regard to his fellow-men that he must deal lovingly with them. Has God forgiven me? then I can freely forgive those who have trespassed against me. It is the first impulse of a soul which receives pardon from God to put away all enmity against his fellow-men. I freely forgive the few pence that my fellow sinner owes me when I remember the thousand talents which were forgiven me by the infinite mercy of my God. The man who does not forgive has never been forgiven, but the man who has been freely forgiven at once forgives others. Nay, he goes beyond it: he says, "Now, my God has been so good to me, I will be good to others, and as God is good to the unthankful and the evil, even so will I be." When he finds that he has given his alms to an undeserving person, he does not therefore shrivel up within himself and say, "I will give no more." "Why!" saith he, "does not God give life and light to men who are always cursing him? then I will bless the sons of men even if they curse me in return." This breeds in him a spirit of benevolence. He longs to see others saved, and therefore he lays himself out to bring them to Jesus Christ. If he had bought his salvation I dare say he might be proud of it, and wish to keep it to himself; like a little aristocrat, he would not want every one of the democracy to intrude into his privileges, but since the gospel came to him freely he hears the Master say: "Freely ye have received, freely give," and he goes forth to distribute the bread of life which Jesus Christ has so liberally put into his hand.

Then as to our God, the free gifts of grace, working by the power and energy of the Holy Spirit, create in us the generous virtues towards God. Now we can say,

"Loved of my God, for him again
With love intense I burn."

When we know that Jesus has saved us we feel we could lay down our lives for him. Self-denial springs of this; yea, the death of self comes out of a rich experience of free and sovereign grace. Did the Lord love me when there was nothing to love in me? Did he love me with spontaneous love before the world began? Did he give his son to die for me a guilty sinner, lost and ruined in the fall? Then I will give all that I have to God, and feel that if—

"If I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great
That I would give him all."

This is the natural outgrowth of the grand doctrine of "without money and without price."

And, lastly, beloved, I cannot think of anything that will *make more devout worshippers in heaven* than this. The method of God in seeking his glory by the way of redemption was evidently this. There were spirits in heaven who could worship him, angels who could adore him and remain faithful to him; but he wished to create beings who should be nearer to him than angels, though also in a certain sense still further off. An angel is pure spirit, man is partly materialism. God resolved that a creature that should be both spirit and matter should be lifted up above angels, should come nearer to himself than pure spirits have ever come, should in fact be related to himself through his Son. Thus his Son became a man, that God being all in all, next to God should stand man, made to have dominion over all the works of his hands, with all things put under his feet. Now, observe, that unless there had been some exercise of omnipotence which would have taken away the high attribute of free agency from man, we do not know of any other way in which God could secure the eternal obedience, the reverent love, and the perpetual humility of such creatures as we have spoken of, except by a remarkable experience of redemption, so that they should for ever know that everything they had was the undeserved gift of sovereign grace. When they look upon the crown and wave the palm, they remember that they were once snatched from the horrible pit and the miry clay. When they gaze upon their robes of splendour, and stand before the throne of God peers of the universe, princes of the blood royal of heaven, no pride will ever flit across their perfect souls, because the memory of redeeming grace, and dying love, and blessings given without money and without price, will keep them humble before the Lord. Oh, if they had given something, if they had done something, if they had merited something, this would have marred the whole, and left a gap whereby might enter the temptation to self-glory. Every child of God will know eternally that he is saved by grace, grace, grace, from first to last, from beginning to end; and so without constraint, except that which is found within their own bosoms, all the redeemed will for ever magnify the Lord in such notes as these, "Worthy art thou, O Lamb of God! For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, and hast made us kings and priests unto God."

May the Lord lead you all to receive his divine salvation "without money and without price"

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah lv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—199, 492, 552.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SAVING FAITH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 15TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Thy faith hath saved thee."—Luke vii. 50; and Luke xviii. 42.

Do not remember that this expression is found anywhere else in the word of God. It is found in these two places in the Gospel by Luke, not in any other Gospel. Luke also gives us in two other places a kindred, and almost identical expression, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." This you will find used in reference to the woman whose issue of blood had been stanch'd (Luke viii. 48), and in connection with that of the ten lepers who returned to praise the Saviour for the cure they had received (Luke xvii. 19). You will find the expression, "Thy faith hath made thee whole" once in Matthew and twice in Mark, but find it twice in Luke, and together therewith the twice repeated words of our text, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Are we wrong in supposing that the long intercourse of Luke with the apostle Paul led him not only to receive the great doctrine of justification by faith which Paul so plainly taught, and to attach to faith that high importance which Paul always did, but also to have a peculiar memory for those expressions which were used by the Saviour, in which faith was most fully honoured to a very high degree. Albeit Luke would not have written anything which was not true for the sake of maintaining the grand doctrine so clearly taught by the apostle, yet I think his full conviction of it would help to recall to his memory more vividly those words of the Lord Jesus from which it could be more clearly learned and illustrated. Be that as it may, we know that Luke was inspired, that he has written neither more nor less than what the Saviour actually said, and hence we may be quite sure that the expression, "Thy faith hath saved thee," fell from the Redeemer's lips, and we are bound to accept it as pure unquestionable truth, and we may rely on it ourselves without fear of misleading others, or trenching upon any other truth. I mention this because the other day I heard an

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correct friend say that faith did not save us, at which announcement I was rather surprised. The brother, it is true, qualified the expression, and showed that he meant to make it clear that Jesus saved us, and not our own act of faith. I agreed with what he meant, but not with what he said, for he had no right to use an expression which was in flat contradiction to the distinct declaration of the Saviour, "Thy faith hath saved thee." We are not to strain any expression to make it mean more than the speaker intended, and it is well to guard words from being misunderstood; but on the other hand, we may not quite go so far as absolutely to negative a declaration of the Lord himself, however we may mean to qualify it. It is to be qualified if you like, but it is not to be contradicted, for there it stands, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Now we shall this morning, by God's help, inquire *what was it that saved the two persons whose history will come before us?* It was their faith. Our second inquiry will be *what kind of faith was it which saved them?* and then thirdly, *what does this teach us in reference to faith?*

I. WHAT WAS IT THAT SAVED the two persons whose history we are about to consider?

In the penitent woman's case, her great sins were forgiven her and she became a woman of extraordinary love: she loved much, for she had much forgiven. I feel, in thinking of her, something like an eminent father of the church who said, "This narrative is not one which I can well preach upon; I had far rather weep over it in secret." That woman's tears, that woman's unbraided tresses wiping the Saviour's feet, her coming so near to her Lord in such company, facing such proud cavillers, with such fond and resolute intent of doing honour to Jesus; verily, among those that have loved the Saviour, there hath not lived a greater than this woman who was a sinner. Yet for all that Jesus did not say to her, "Thy love hath saved thee." Love is a golden apple of the tree of which faith is the root, and the Saviour took care not to ascribe to the fruit that which belongs only to the root. This loving woman was also right notable for her repentance. Mark ye well those tears. Those were no tears of sentimental emotion, but a rain of holy heart-sorrow for sin. She had been a sinner and she knew it; she remembered well her multitude of iniquities, and she felt each sin deserved a tear, and there she stood weeping herself away, because she had offended her dear Lord. Yet it is not said, "Thy repentance hath saved thee." Her being saved caused her repentance, but repentance did not save her. Sorrow for sin is an early token of grace within the heart, yet it is nowhere said, "Thy sorrow for sin hath saved thee." She was a woman of great humility. She came behind the Lord and washed his feet, as though she felt herself only able to be a menial servant to perform works of drudgery, and to find a pleasure in so serving her Lord. Her reverence for him had reached a very high point; she regarded him as a king, and she did what has sometimes been done for monarchs by zealous subjects—she kissed the feet of her heart's Lord, who well deserved the homage. Her loyal reverence led her to kiss the feet of her Lord, the Sovereign of her soul, but I do not find that Jesus said, "Thy humility hath saved thee;" or that he said, "Thy reverence hath saved thee;" but

he put the crown upon the head of her faith, and said expressly, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

In the case of the blind man to whom my second text refers—this man was notable for his earnestness; he cried, and cried aloud, "Son of David, have mercy on me." He was notable for his importunity, for they who would have silenced him rebuked him in vain; he cried so much the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me." But I do not discover that Christ attributed his salvation to his prayers, earnest and importunate though they were. It is not written, "Thy prayers have saved thee"; it is written, "Thy faith hath saved thee." He was a man of considerable and clear knowledge, and he had a distinct apprehension of the true character of Christ: he scorned to call him Jesus of Nazareth, as the crowd did, but he proclaimed him "Son of David," and in the presence of that throng he dared avow his full conviction that the humble man, dressed in a peasant's garb, who was threading his way through the throng, was none other than the royal heir of the royal line of Judah, and was indeed the fulfiller of the type of David, the expected Messiah, the King of the Jews, the Son of David. Yet I do not find that Jesus attributed his salvation to his knowledge, to his clear apprehension, or to his distinct avowal of his Messiahship; but he said to him, "Thy faith hath saved thee," laying the entire stress of his salvation upon his faith.

This being so in both cases, we are led to ask, what is the reason for it? What is the reason why in every case, in every man that is saved, faith is the great instrument of salvation? Is it not first because God has a right to choose what way of salvation he pleases, and he has chosen that men should be saved, not by their works, but by their faith in his dear Son? God has a right to give his mercy to whom he pleases; he has a right to give it when he pleases; he has a right to give it in what mode he pleases; and know ye this, O sons of men, that the decree of heaven is immutable, and standeth fast for ever—"He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." To this there shall be no exception; Jehovah has made the rule and it shall stand. If thou wouldst have salvation, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"; but if not, salvation is utterly impossible to thee. This is the appointed way; follow it, and it leads to heaven; refuse it, and thou must perish. This is God's sovereign determination, "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God." Jehovah's will be done. If this be his method of grace, let us not kick against it. If he determines that faith shall save, so let it be; only, Good Master, create and increase our faith.

But while I attribute this to the sovereign choice of God, I do see, for Scripture plainly indicates it, a reason in the nature of things why faith should thus have been selected. The apostle tells us it is of faith that it might be of grace. If the condition of salvation had been either feeling or working, then, such is the depravity of our nature, that we should inevitably have attributed the merit of salvation to the working or the feeling. We should have claimed something whereof to glory. It matters not how low the condition may have

been, man would have still considered that there was something required of him, that something came from him, and that, therefore, he might take some credit to himself. But no man, unless he be demented, ever claims credit for believing the truth. If he hears that which convinces him, he is convinced; and if he be persuaded, he is persuaded; but he feels that it could not well be otherwise. He attributes the effect to the truth and the influence used. He does not go about and boast because he believes what is so clear to him that he cannot doubt it. If he did so boast of spiritual faith, all thinking men would say at once, "Wherefore dost thou boast in the fact of having believed, and especially when this believing would never have been thine if it had not been for the force of the truth which convinced thee, and the working of the Spirit of God which constrained thee to believe?" Faith is chosen by Christ to wear the crown of salvation because—let me contradict myself—it refuses to wear the crown. It was Christ that saved the penitent woman, it was Christ that saved that blind beggar, but he takes the crown from off his own head, so dear is faith to him, and he puts the diadem upon the head of faith and says, "Thy faith hath saved thee," because he is absolutely certain that faith will never take the glory to herself, but will again lay the crown at the pierced feet, and say, "Not unto myself be glory, for thou hast done it; thou art the Saviour, and thou alone." In order, then, to illustrate and to protect the interests of sovereign grace, and to shut out all vain glorying, God has been pleased to make the way of salvation to be by faith, and by no other means.

Nor is this all. It is clear to every one who chooses to think that in order to the renewal of the heart, which is the chief part of salvation, it is well to begin with the faith; because faith once rightly exercised becomes the mainspring of the entire nature. The man believes that he is forgiven. What then? He feels gratitude to him who has pardoned him. Feeling gratitude, it is but natural that he should hate that which displeases his Saviour, and should love intensely that which is pleasing to him who saved him, so that faith operates upon the entire nature, and becomes the instrument in the hand of the regenerating Spirit by which all the faculties of the soul are put into the right condition. As a man thinketh in his heart so is he, but his thinkings come out of his believings; if he be put right in his believings, then his understanding will operate upon his affections, and all the other powers of his manhood, and old things will pass away, all things will become new through the wonderful effect of the faith, which is of the operation of God. Faith works by love, and through love it purifies the soul, and the man becomes a new creature. See ye then the wisdom of God? He may choose what way he will, but he chooses a way which at once guards his grace from our felonious boastings, and on the other hand produces in us a holiness which otherwise never would have been there.

Faith in salvation, however, is not the meritorious cause; nor is it in any sense the salvation itself. Faith saves us just as the mouth saves from hunger. If we be hungry, bread is the real cure for hunger, but still it would be right to say that eating removes hunger, seeing that the bread itself could not benefit us, unless the mouth should eat it. Faith is the soul's mouth, whereby the hunger of the heart is

ved. Christ also is the brazen serpent lifted up ; all the healing is in him ; yet no healing virtue comes out of the brazen serpent by who will not look ; so that the looking is rightly considered to be the act which saves. True, in the deepest sense it is Christ who saves, to him be all the glory ; but without looking to him ye cannot be saved, so that

“ There is life in a look,”

all as life in the Saviour to whom you look. Nothing is yours unless you appropriate it. If you be enriched, the thing appropriated enriches you ; yet it is not incorrect but strictly right to say it is the appropriation of the blessing which makes you rich. Faith is the hand that takes the soul. Stretched out, it lays hold of the salvation of Christ, and by faith we are saved. “ Thy faith hath saved thee.” I need not linger longer on that point. It is self-evident from the text that faith is the great means of salvation.

[WHAT KIND OF FAITH WAS IT that saved these people ? I mention, first, the essential *agreements* ; and then, secondly, the *rentia*, or the points in which this faith differed in its external manifestations in the two cases.

In the instances of the penitent woman and the blind beggar, their faith was fixed alone in Jesus. You cannot discover anything floating in their faith in Jesus which adulterated it ; it was unmixed faith in Jesus. The woman pressed forward to *him*, her tears fell on *him* ; her repentment was for *him* ; her unloosed tresses were a towel for *his* feet ; she cared for no one else, not even for the disciples whom she respected for *his* sake ; her whole spirit and soul were absorbed in him. He could blot out her sins. She believed him ; she did it unto him. The same was the case with that blind man. He had no thought of any ceremonies to be performed by priests ; he had no idea of any medicine which might be given him by physicians. His cry was, “ Son of David, Son of David.” The only notice he took of others was to disorder them, and still to cry, “ Son of David, Son of David.” “ What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee ? ” was the Lord’s question, and it referred to the desire of his soul, for he knew that if anything were done must be done by the Son of David. It is essential that our faith must stand alone on Jesus. Mix anything with Christ, and you are undone. Our faith shall stand with one foot upon the rock of his merits, and the other foot upon the sand of your own duties, it will fall, and great will be the fall thereof. Build wholly on the rock, for if so much as a corner of the edifice shall rest on anything beside, it will ensure the fall of the whole :—

“ None but Jesus, none but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”

True faith is alike in this respect.

The faith of these two was alike in its confession of unworthiness. What meant her standing behind ? What meant her tears, her ever-flowing tears, but that she felt unworthy to draw near to Jesus ? And what meant the beggar’s cry, “ Have mercy on me ” ? Note the stress upon it. “ Have *mercy* on me.” He does not claim the cure for his merit, nor ask it as a reward. To mercy he appealed. Now I care

not whose faith it is, whether it be that of David in his bitter cries of the fifty-first Psalm, or whether it be that of Paul in his highest exaltation upon being without condemnation through Christ, there is always in connection with true faith a thorough and deep sense that it is mercy, mercy alone, which saves us from the wrath to come. Dear hearer, do not deceive yourself. Faith and boasting are as opposite to one another as the two poles. If you come before Christ with your righteousness in your hand, you come without faith; but if you come with faith you must also come with confession of sin, for true faith always walks hand in hand with a deep sense of guiltiness before the Most High. This is so in every case.

Their faith was alike, moreover, in defying and conquering opposition. Little do we know the inward struggles of the penitent as she crossed the threshold of Simon's house. "He will repel thee," the stern, cold Pharisee will say, "Get thee gone, thou strumpet; how darest thou defile the doors of honest men." But whatever may happen she passes through the door, she comes to where the feet of the Saviour are stretched out towards the entrance as he is reclining at the table, and there she stands. Simon glanced at her: he thought the glance would wither her, but her love to Christ was too well rooted to be withered by him. No doubt he made many signs of his displeasure, and showed that he was horrified at such a creature being anywhere near him, but she took no notice of him. Her Lord was there, and she felt safe. Timid as a dove, she trembled not while he was near; but she returned no defiant glances for Simon's haughty looks; her eyes were occupied with weeping. She did not turn aside to demand an explanation of his unkind motions, for her lips were all engrossed with kissing those dear feet. Her Lord, her Lord, was all to her. She overcame through faith in him, and held her ground, and did not leave the house till he dismissed her with "Go in peace."

It was the same with the blind man. He said, "Son of David, have mercy on me." They cried, "Hush! Why these clamours, blind beggar? His eloquence is music; do not interrupt him. Never man spake as he is speaking. Every tone rings like the harps of the angels. Hush! How darest thou spoil his discourse?" But over and above them all went up the importunate prayer, "Son of David, have mercy upon me," and he prevailed. All true faith is opposed. If thy faith be never tried it is not born of the race of the church militant. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," but it is indicated in that very declaration that there must be something to overcome, and that faith must wage war for its existence.

Once more, the faith of these two persons was alike in being openly avowed. I will not say that the avowal took the same form in both, for it did not; but still it was equally open. There is the Saviour, and there comes the weeping penitent. She loves him. Is she ashamed to say so? It may bring her reproach; it will certainly rake up the old reproaches against her, for she has been a sinner. Never mind what she has been, nor who may be present to see her. She loves her Lord, and she will show it. She will bring the ointment and she will anoint his feet, even in the presence of Pharisees, Pharisees who would say, "Is this one of the disciples of Christ? A pretty convert to

of! A fine conquest this, for his kingdom! A harlot becomes a disciple! What next and what next?" She must have known and felt all that, but still there was no concealment. She knew her Lord, and she would avow it, and so in the very house of the Master, there being no other opportunity so convenient, she comes forward, and without words, but with actions far more eloquent than words, she says, "I love him. These tears shall show it; this ointment shall diffuse the knowledge of it, as its sweet perfume fills the room; every lock of my hair shall be a witness that I am my Lord's and my Master's." She avowed her faith.

And so did the blind man. He did not sit there and say, "I know you are the Son of David, but I must not say it." They said, some of them contemptuously, and others indifferently, "It is Jesus of Nazareth." But he will not have it so. "Thou Son of David," saith he, and loud above their noise I hear him cry, like a herald proclaiming the King, "Son of David." Why, sirs, it seems to me he was exalted to high office: he became the herald of the King, and proclaimed, and this belongs to a high officer of State in our country. The blind beggar showed great decision and courage. He cried in a loud voice, "Son of David thou art; Son of David I proclaim thee; Son of David thou shalt be proclaimed, whoever may gainsay it; only turn on thy eyes and have mercy upon me." Are there any of you here who have a faith in Christ which you are ashamed of? I also am ashamed of you, and so also will Christ be ashamed of you when he cometh in glory of his Father and all his holy angels with him. Ashamed to own that you are honest? Then methinks you must live in bad company, where to be a rogue is to be famous; and if you are ashamed to say, "I love my Lord," methinks you are courting the friendship of Christ's enemies, and what can you be but an enemy yourself? You love him, say it. Put on your Master's regimentals, enlist in his army, and come forward and declare, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Their faith was alike then in these particulars, it was fixed alone on him, it was accompanied with a sense of unworthiness, it struggled and conquered opposition, and it boldly declared itself before all comers.

By your patience I shall now try to show the *differences* between the woman's faith as to its manifestations. First, the woman's faith acted like a woman's faith. She showed tender love, and the affections are the glory and the strength of women. They were certainly such in this case.

Her love was intense, womanly love, and she poured it out upon the Saviour. The man's faith acted like a man's in its determination and strength. He persisted in crying, "Thou Son of David." There was something that was masculine about his faith as there was of the feminine about the penitent's faith, and everything should be in its order and after its season. It would not have been meet for the woman's voice to be heard so boldly above the crowd; it would have seemed out of place for a man's tears to have been falling upon the Saviour's face.

Either one or the other might have been justifiable, but they should not have been equally suitable. But now they are as suitable as they are excellent. The woman acts as a godly woman should; the man like a godly man. Never let us measure ourselves

by other people. Do not, my brother, say, "I could not shed tears." Who asked thee to do so? A man's tears are mostly within, and so let them be: it is ours to use other modes of showing our love. And, my sister, do not say, "I could not act as a herald and publicly proclaim the King." I doubt not thou couldest do so if there were need, but thy tears in secret, and those wordless tokens of love to Jesus which thou art rendering, are not less acceptable because they are not the same as a man would give. Nay, they are the better because they are more suitable to thee. Do not think that all the flowers of God's garden must bloom in the same colour or shed the same perfume.

Notice next that the woman acted like a woman who had been a sinner. What more meet than tears? What fitter place for her than at the Saviour's feet? She had been a sinner, she acts like a sinner; but the man who had been a beggar acted like a beggar. What does a beggar do but clamour for alms? Did he not beg gloriously? Never one plied the trade more earnestly than he. "Son of David," said he, "have mercy on me." I should not have liked to have seen the beggar sitting there weeping; nor to have heard the penitent woman shouting. Neither would have been natural or seemly. Faith works according to the condition, circumstances, sex, or ability of the person in whom it lives, and it best shows itself in its own form, not in an artificial manner, but in the natural outflow of the heart.

Observe, also, that the woman did not speak. There is something very beautiful in the golden silence of the woman, which was richer than her silver speech would have been. But the man was not silent; he spoke; he spoke out, and his words were excellent. I venture to say that the woman's silence spoke as powerfully as the man's voice. Of the two I think I find more eloquence in the tears bedewing, and unbraided hair wiping the Saviour's feet, than in the cry, "Son of David, have mercy on me." Yet both forms of expression were equally good, the silence best in the woman with her tears, and the speech best in the man with his confident trust in Christ. Do not think it necessary, dear friend, in order to serve, to do other people's work. What thine own hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. If you think you can never honour Christ till you enter a pulpit, it may be just possible that you will afterwards honour him best by getting out of it as quickly as you can. There have been persons well qualified to adorn the religion of Christ with a lapstone on their lap who have thought it necessary to mount a pulpit, and in that position have been a hindrance to Christ and his gospel. Sister, there is a sphere for you; keep to it, let none push you out of it; but do not think there is nothing else to do except the work which some other woman does. God has called her, let her follow God's voice: he calls you in another direction, follow his voice thither. You will be most like that other excellent woman when you are most different from her: I mean, you will be most truly obedient to Christ, as she is, if you pursue quite another path.

There was a difference, again, in this. The woman gave—she brought her ointment. The man did the opposite—he begged. There are various ways of showing love to Christ, which are equally excellent

tokens of faith. To give him of her ointment, and give him of her tears, and give him the accommodation of her hair, was well; it showed her faith, which worked by love: to give nothing, for the beggar had nothing to give, but simply to honour Christ by appealing to his bounty and his royal power, was best in the beggar. I can commend neither above the other, for I doubt not that both the penitent and the beggar gave Christ their whole heart, and what more does Jesus ask for from any one?

The thoughts of the woman and the thoughts of the beggar were different too. Her thoughts were mainly about the past, and her sins—hence her tears. To be forgiven, that was her point. His thoughts were mainly about the present, and did not so much concern his sin as his deficiency, infirmity, and inability, and so he came with different thoughts. I do not doubt that he thought of sin, as I dare say she also thought of infirmity; but in her case the thought of sin was uppermost, and hence the tears; in his the infirmity was uppermost, and hence the prayer, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." Do not, then, compare your experience with that of another. God is a God of wonderful variety. The painter who repeats himself in many pictures has a paucity of conception, but the master artist scarcely ever sketches the same thing a second time. There is a boundless variety in genius, and God who transcends all the genius of men, creates an infinite variety in the works of his grace. Look not, therefore, for likeness everywhere. The woman, it is said, loved much, and she proved her love by her acts; but the man loved much too, and showed his love by actions which were most admirable, for he followed Jesus in the way, glorifying God. Yet they were different actions. I do not find that he brought any box of ointment, or anointed Christ's feet, neither do I find that she literally followed Christ in the way, though no doubt she followed him in the spirit; neither did she with a loud voice glorify God as the restored blind beggar did. There are differences of operation, but the same Lord; there are differences of capacity and differences of calling, and by this reflection I hope you will be enabled to deliver yourselves from the fault of judging one by another, and that you will look for the same faith, but not for the same development of it.

So interesting is this subject that I want you to follow me while I very rapidly sketch the woman's case, and then the man's, not mentioning the differences one by one, but allowing the two pictures to impress themselves separately upon your minds.

Observe this woman. What a strange compound she was. She was consciously unworthy, and therefore she wept, yet she drew very near to Jesus. Her acts were those of nearness and communion; she washed his feet with her tears, she wiped them with the hairs of her head, and meanwhile she kissed them again and again. "She hath not ceased," said Christ, "to kiss my feet." A sense of unworthiness, and the enjoyment of communion, were mixed together. Oh, divine faith which blends the two! She was shamefaced, yet was she very bold. She dared not look the Master in the face as yet; she approached him from behind; yet she dared face Simon, and remain in his room, whether he frowned or no. I have known some who have blushed in

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the face of Christ who would not have blushed before a judge, nor at the cross, if they had been dragged there for Christ's sake. Such a woman was Anna Simon, humble before her Master, but like a lioness before the lion of God.

This faithful woman wept, she was a mourner, yet she had a deep joy. She knew the pain for every kind of joy. Every time she lifted her hands to God, and bowed them, her heart leaped with the transport of love. Her heart knew bitterness for sin, but it knew also the sweetness of pardon. What a mixture! Faith made the compound. She was humble, never any more so; yet see how she takes upon herself to deal with the King himself. Brethren, you and I are satisfied, and well we may be, for we may wash the saints' feet, but she was not. Oh, the courage of this woman! She will pass through the outer court, and she goes to the King's own throne, and there pay her homage, in her own person, or her person, and wash the feet of the Wonderful, the Unchangeable, the Mighty God. I know not that an angel ever performed such such and service, and therefore this woman takes precedence as having done for Jesus what no other being ever did. I have said that she was silent, and yet she spoke; I will add, she was despised, but Christ set her high in honour, and made Simon, who despised her, to feel little in her presence. I will also add she was a great sinner, but she was a great saint. Her great sinfulness, when pardoned, became the raw stuff out of which great saints are made by the mighty power of God. Finally she was saved by faith, so says the text, but if ever there was a case in which James could not have said, "Shall faith save thee?" and in which he must have said, "Here is one that shows her faith by her works," it was the case of this woman. There she is before you. Imitate her faith itself, though you cannot actually copy her deeds.

Now look at the man. He was blind, but he could see a great deal more than the Pharisees, who said they could see. Blind, but his inward optics saw the king in his beauty, saw the splendor of his throne, and he confessed it. He was a beggar, but he had a royal soul, and a strong sovereign determination which was not to be put down. He had the kind of mind which dwells in men who are princes among their fellows. He is not to be stopped by disciples, nay, nor by apostles. He has begun to pray, and pray he will till he obtains the boon he seeks. Note well that what he knew he avowed, what he desired he pleaded for, and what he needed he understood. "Lord, that I might receive my sight;" he was clear about his needs, and clear about the only person who could supply them. What he asked for he expected, for when he was bidden to come he evidently expected that his sight would be restored, for we are told by another Evangelist that he cast away his beggar's cloak. He felt he should never want to beg again. He was sure his eyes were about to be opened. Lastly, what he received he was grateful for, for as soon as he could walk without a guide he took Christ to be his guide, and followed him in the way, glorifying him. Look on both pictures. May you have the shadows and the lights of both, as far as they would tend to make two another and distinct picture by the selfsame artist, whose hand can produce such wonders.

III. WHAT DOES THIS TEACH US IN REFERENCE TO FAITH? It teaches us first that faith is all important. Do, I pray you, my hearers, see whether you have the precious faith, the faith of God's elect. Remember there are not many things in Scripture called precious; but there is the precious blood, and there goes with it the precious faith. If you have not that you are lost; if you have not that you are neither fit to live nor fit to die; if you have not that, your eternal destiny will be infinite despair; but if you have faith, though it be as a grain of mustard seed, you are saved. "Thy faith hath saved thee."

Learn next that the main matter in faith is the person whom you believe. I do not say *in* whom you believe. That would be true, but not quite so scriptural an expression. Paul does not say, as I hear most people quote it, "I know *in* whom I have believed." Faith believes Christ. Your faith must recognise him as a person, and come to him as a person, and rest not in his teaching merely, or his work only, but in him. "Come unto *me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." A personal Saviour for sinners! Are you resting on him alone? Do you believe him? You know the safety of the building depends mainly upon the foundation, and if the foundation be not right, you may build as you will, it will not last. Do you build, then, on Christ alone? Inquire about that as a special point.

Observe next, that we must not expect exactly the same manifestation in each convert. Let not the elders of the church expect it, let not parents require it from their children; let not anxious friends look for it; do not expect it in yourself. Biographies are very useful, but they may become a snare. I must not judge that I am not a child of God because I am not precisely like that good man whose life I have just been reading. Am I resting in Christ? Do I believe him? Then it may be the Lord's grace is striking out quite a different path for me from that which has been trodden by my brother, that it may illustrate other phases of its power, and show to principalities and powers the exceeding riches of divine love.

And, lastly, the matter which sums up all is this, if we have faith in Jesus we are saved, and ought not to talk or act as if there were any question about it. "THY FAITH HATH SAVED THEE." Jesus says it. Granted, you have faith in Christ, and it is certain that faith hath saved you. Do not, therefore, go on talking and acting and feeling as if you were not saved. I know a company of saved people who say every Sabbath, "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners"; but they are not miserable sinners if they are saved, and for them to use such words is to throw a slight upon the salvation which Christ has given them. If they are saved sinners, they ought to be rejoicing saints. What some say others do not say, but they act as if it were so. They go about asking God to give them the mercy they have already obtained, hoping some day to receive what Christ assures them is already in their possession, talking to others as if it were a matter of question whether they are saved or not, when it cannot be a matter of question. "Thy faith hath saved thee." Fancy the poor penitent woman turning round and saying to the Saviour, "Lord, I humbly hope that it is true." There

would have been neither humility nor faith in such an expression. Imagine that blind man, when Christ said, "Thy faith hath saved thee," saying, "I trust that in future years it will be found to be so." would be a belying at once of his own earnest character and of Christ's honesty of speech. If thou hast believed thou art saved. Do not say as if thou wert not, but now down from the willows take thy harp and sing unto the Lord a new song. I have noticed in many prayers a tendency to avoid speaking as if facts were facts. I have noticed this kind of expression, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof *we desire* to be glad." The text is, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad;" and if the Lord has done these great things for us our right is to be glad about them, not to say with an infamous "if" upon our lips before the Lord who cannot lie. If ye are dealing with your fellow creatures, suspect them, for they may not deserve it; if ye are listening to their promises, doubt them, for promises go to be broken; but if ye are dealing with your Father and Master, never suspect him, for he is beyond suspicion; never doubt his promises, for heaven and earth and hell shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of his word shall fail. I claim for Christ that ye shall never go away for ever all the talk which is made up of "buts," and "ifs," " peradventures," and "I hope," and "I trust." You are in the presence of One who said, "Verily, verily," and meant what he said, who is "the Amen, the faithful and true witness."

You would not spit in his face if he were here, yet your "buts" and "ifs" are so much insult cast upon his truth. You would scourge him, but what do your doubts do but vex him and put him to shame? If he lies, never believe him; if he speaks the truth, never doubt him. Then shall ye know when ye have cast aside your unbelief, that your faith has saved you, and ye will go in peace.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Luke vii. 36—50; xviii. 35—43.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—18 (Ver. I.), 536, 1

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

REDEMPTION AND ITS CLAIMS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 8TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Ye are bought with a price."—1 Corinthians vi. 20.

"Ye are bought with a price."—1 Corinthians vii. 23.

THE same words are found in each place, though a different inference is drawn from them. "Ye are bought with a price." This morning's text was "Without money and without price," and to the best of my ability I tried to show how freely the blessings of the gospel are bestowed upon the sons of men. But though they cost us nothing, they cost the Saviour dear. They are without price to us, but what a price he paid! Well did our poet put it in the remarkable verse which we sang—

"There's ne'er a gift his hand bestows
But cost his heart a groan."

Out of that fact grow certain most weighty practical truths, and I have chosen it as the subject of this evening's discourse that I may urge them upon your minds. May the Holy Spirit work graciously through the word which you will hear, and cause you to live as those who are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.

First, I shall have to say to you that *redemption is our chief blessing*—nothing better can be said of you than this, "Ye are bought with a price." Then I shall have to remind you that *redemption on God's part becomes his paramount claim upon us*; and thirdly, I shall have to show that *this claim is remarkably extensive*, and I shall urge you to admit it.

I. First, then, "YE ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE."

To every man of whom this may be said, it is the best news he ever heard. An angel sent from heaven could not bring to any man or woman here a more delightful message than this, "Thou art bought with a price, even with the precious blood of Christ." "Ye are Christ's," says the apostle in the chapter we read to you (1 Cor. iii.), and he seemed as if

his heart glowed as he said it. He even made it the climax of a remarkable burst of eloquence. "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are your's; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." To be bought with a price is the grandest distinction of our manhood, and lifts us above angels themselves. It puts great honour upon the saints, even as the Lord has said, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee."

Redemption is a greater mercy than *creation*. It is no mean blessing to have been made, and to have been made a man rather than a dog, or a toad, or a worm, to have been blest with intellect, with a mind that can soar into the unseen, a judgment which can weigh, a memory which can retain, an imagination which can create and colour thoughts of every kind. It is no little matter to be capable of mental joys which widen the sphere of existence, beliefs which open up the past and make us see the far gone ages, and hopes which relieve the darkness of the present with lamps borrowed from the future. It is a great thing to be a man and not a bird—a man with a soul which will never fall by the fowler's gun. It is a great thing to be an immortal man, to be a creature that shall live on for ever, into whom God has dropped a spark of undying flame. It is a grand thing to have a spirit within us, and not to be dumb driven cattle. But for all that, although man is highly elevated in the scale of being, and stands even at the very top of being as respects this world, having dominion over all the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea; yet if thou, O created man, be not redeemed, everything about thee will only be turned into a curse, so that it were better for thee that a millstone had been tied about thy neck, that thou hadst been thrown into the depths of the sea, or even better for thee that thou hadst never been born, if thou art not redeemed. "Bought with a price" makes existence life; to be unredeemed would make existence an endless death.

Providence also is a short word, calling before our minds a great mass of mercies; but providence is second in its blessedness to redemption. I would remind you of the inestimable blessings which the providence of God has brought to many here present; it is no small thing to be in health, no little thing to have your reason preserved to you. It is no minor blessing to have bread to eat and raiment to put on, and not to be distressed as many of the poorest of our brethren are as to where they shall lay their heads, and where they shall find to-morrow's food. Some of us are surrounded with many comforts, and ought, every time we look at the bed on which we sleep at night, and the room in which we spend our days, to sing unto God who has favoured us so much,

"Not more than others we deserve,
But God has given us more."

Look around you! Some of you have not only the necessities, but the luxuries of life. You are favoured exceedingly in these things. *Oh, if you be not redeemed, what will it matter though you were*

clothed in scarlet and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, like Dives, and then should lift up your eyes in the flames of hell? What would it matter though you had the comeliness and majestic appearance of an Absalom, and yet over you a pious father would have to say, "Would God I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son, my son!" What would it be to you to have been possessor of the world, and to have called the seas your own, if you had no part or lot in the redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ, and were never saved from wrath through him? Redemption demands a louder note of gratitude than creation! Sweet as providence must ever be to the believer, yet redemption, redemption is the best wine kept unto the last, the last and best work of heaven, the mirror in which the brightest attributes of Jehovah are most clearly reflected. This is the head-stone of the corner, crowning the great temple of divine grace. "God so loved the world"—not as to make it fair and beautiful; that is not enough: "God so loved the world"—not so as to sustain it, and give it day and night, and summer and winter; that is not enough: but the line that will fathom the depths of divine love is this: he "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

Remember, dear friends, that redemption is that which gives effect to all the other great blessings of God. I say "great blessings," for I refer to spiritual blessings; all these need redemption to complete their design. For instance, election, the well-head of grace, needs the conduit-pipe of redemption to bring its streams down to sinners. We are chosen of God, but unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. The saints are chosen in him, and without him of what avail would election be? Where, also, would be our calling? Vain would it be to be called if there were no feast of dying love for us to be called to, and no fountain filled with blood to which we might come at the call. Redemption is the fulness of all the blessings of God; they are like Gideon's fleece, and redemption bedews them. It is the key of heaven, the channel of grace, the door of hope. It constitutes our song in the house of our pilgrimage, and will be the theme of our eternal music above.

I would not fail to remind you, also, that redemption at this moment is the foundation of all the real peace that any man possesses. If you have any peace of mind worth having, you have found it at the foot of the cross. If the tempest of your fears concerning the wrath of God has been quieted, there is only one voice which could have stilled its boisterous noise; it is the voice of Jesus. Peace apart from the blood of Jesus there is not, except it be that delusive peace which, like the solemn stillness which precedes the hurricane, is only the forerunner of destruction. All the peace you have is through redemption, and all the security you have comes by the same way. You hope to be saved at the last, your trust is that you shall die triumphantly, and rise rejoicingly, but it is all through the blood. Where were all the saints if it were not for redeeming grace and dying love? Notwithstanding their professions they are without Christ as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Piety has no root where redemption is unknown. Past experience and present enjoyment would melt away

like the rime of the morning's frost before the rising sun, were it not that we are sealed by the precious blood of Christ ; and the Lord knoweth them that are his, and will keep them securely to the end.

But, oh, beloved, there is one more truth never to be forgotten. It is through redeeming grace that we expect to enter heaven. In a few short weeks, or months, or, peradventure, years, you and I, who believe in Jesus, will be in the glory. We shall have done with these work-days here, and shall have entered into the endless Sabbath ; we shall be—

“Where congregations ne'er break up,
And worship has no end.”

Our head shall soon wear the crown immortal, and our hands shall bear the harp from which we will draw the richest music of praise ; but our only hope to enter there is through the blood, and our only song there shall be : “We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” O ye morning stars that sang together when a new-made world first revolved around the sun ! O ye wondering spirits who have oft admired the wisdom and the justice of God in dealing with the sinful race of men, lift high your notes and sing yet sweeter songs concerning redemption, and let your wonder never cease that God should become man, and, as man, should suffer, bleed, and die that he might redeem his people, that of them it might be said they were “bought with a price” !

II. I have thus assured you all that redemption is our best blessing ; I trust ye will not rest without it. Now, I want to dwell upon the next point, namely, that therefore REDEMPTION IS THE LORD'S PARAMOUNT CLAIM UPON US.

Paul does not say, “Ye are not your own : for God made you.” That is true of all things that are, as well the cattle, and the trees and the dust of the earth as regenerated man. He does not say, “Ye are not your own : God created you.” That would be true of the devil, and his angels, and of the whole race of rebellious men. Neither does he say, “Ye are not your own : God preserves you.” That would be most true, for God, who keeps the breath in our nostrils, ought to have our praise ; but that also would be true of all creatures, even of the most wicked. But there is a special point here, “Ye are not your own : ye are *bought*,” not merely made and preserved, but bought, and “bought with a price.” You who are children of God, you were bought as the devils never were, for Jesus never died to save them ; “he took not up angels, but he took up the seed of Abraham.” Ye are bought as the ungodly were not, for they remain the slaves of Satan, and are not redeemed from their vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers. They have rejected the purchase price : they remain unredeemed from their slavery to sin ; but you have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot ; and therefore Christ lays his pierced hand upon you and says, “You are mine.” Your King sets the broad arrow on you, and marks you to-night as royal property. There was one possession which Jacob had which he greatly valued, and which he gave to his darling son Joseph, “because,” he said, “I took it out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and

with my bow." You also are the possession which Christ values beyond everything, because he has delivered you out of the hand of sin and Satan by his own sufferings and death; and because of this he has the highest conceivable right of property in you. He is not merely your Creator and Preserver, but he is your Redeemer; and, therefore, if all the world should refuse him homage, and all men should revolt from him, and even if the angels should desert his standard, yet you must not, for you are bought with a price. Other claims are forcible, but this claim is overwhelming. Other bands are strong, but these cords of love are invincible. The love of Christ constraineth us.

Now, let us look at this claim. Think, beloved, what you were bought from. You were a slave, and you have been redeemed. You were a slave to sin. Remember that. Perhaps there was a time when you could rap out an oath as well as anybody, and when the pleasures of this world and the lusts thereof were sweet morsels under your tongue. How came you to be saved from bad habits and filthy passions? You are bought with a price; you are the Lord's freeman to-day. You have broken those chains, but not by your own power. You have been bought with a price, for "ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ." There is a redemption from sin.

Then you have been redeemed from the punishment of sin. You had begun to feel that. You were full of doubts and fears and dreadful apprehensions of God's wrath, and you felt as if hell had begun in you: it is not so now, the blood of redemption has spoken peace, and you are no more afraid. Well do I remember when the flames of hell burned in my soul, as far as they could in this human life, yea, they dried up my spirit, and parched up my heart, so that my soul chose strangling rather than life; it was such a wretched thing to live. But it is not so now, blessed be God. We are redeemed from remorse and despair, and set free from the horrible sense of guilt. In a little time we should have been in hell; but since we have believed we never shall come into the place of torment, for sin is forgiven and the sense of sin is removed, and we can say in the words of our text of last Sunday night, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that hath risen again, who sitteth at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." We are redeemed from sin, from remorse, and from hell itself.

And now at this moment we are redeemed from the avenging justice of God. Jesus Christ has borne our sins in his own body on the tree, and by the merit of his death has for ever rendered compensation to the injured honour of divine justice. He has magnified the law and made it honourable, so that the law itself can ask no more of a sinner for whom Christ has died, for Christ has paid to the law all that justice could demand. Oh, think of that! Rejoice, beloved, that you are redeemed from sin, and death, and hell, and the claims of unbending justice, and surely you will feel that there is a claim upon you that you should be the Lord's.

Reflect most lovingly upon that dear friend who bought you out of iron bondage, who it was that redeemed you. You have not been

redeemed by an angel. Dear would the angelic name have been had it been so ; but angels were powerless in this grand affair. Who stooped to pick thee up, O insect of a day ? Who stooped to save thee ? Who but he who bears earth's huge pillars up and spreads the heavens abroad ? The Son of God, omnipotent, eternal, and infinite, has fallen in love with the fallen sons of men, and for them has donned the garment of human flesh, and in that flesh has suffered to the death, and died a most shameful death upon the gibbet of Calvary. Oh, tell it everywhere that Jesus Christ, who is God over all, blessed for ever, has redeemed us ! and after that, who will say that we do not belong to him ?

Then think of the price he paid. The text does not tell us about it, and surely the reason for its silence is to be found in the fact that words cannot express the mighty sum. "Ye are bought. Ye are bought with a price." Sometimes it is best when you cannot say what you would, to say nothing at all. The famous painter, when he drew the picture of Agamemnon at the sacrifice of his daughter, felt that he could not depict the sorrow of the father's countenance, and therefore he wisely put a veil over it, and represented him as hiding his face from the fearful sight. So the apostle seems to have felt, "I cannot tell you all that Jesus suffered, so I will leave it. Ye are bought with a price." Now, turn that over lovingly. Muse on it devoutly till your hearts burn like coals of juniper ! "A price !" The price was God born at Bethlehem as a man, and then living thirty years and more in poverty and contumely, suffering in Gethsemane till sweat of blood fell on the ground, falsely accused, ridiculed, spit upon, buffeted, mocked, scourged, nailed to a cross, left there to die, while, in his soul, the great millstone of Jehovah's wrath crushed his spirit as in an olive-press, till his heart was broken and his spirit melted within him like wax. God only knows the sufferings of the Son of God : well does the Greek liturgy pour forth that mysterious plea, "By thine unknown sufferings, good Lord deliver us," for unknown they were. O ye saints, ye were indeed bought with a price, and I charge you, by the agony and bloody sweat, by the cross and passion, own the fact that you belong to Jesus : confess that he bought you with a price incalculable. You are his, and would not wish to question that divine purchase which is the groundwork of your hope. You must not, cannot dispute the sacred claims which Jesus has upon you : rather would you cry, "O Son of David, thine are we, and all that we have."

There is yet this further consideration, that the purchase price of every child of God has been fully paid. I have seen lands which have belonged to men who were reputed to be rich, but there was a heavy mortgage upon them, so that though they called them theirs, they were scarcely so. But there is no mortgage on the saints. There is no debt to be demanded in future ages either of us or of our Redeemer. "It is finished," said the Saviour, and finished it was. He has bought you, and he has paid for you. Are you not his ? There is not one single good work of yours wanted to complete the merit, or a single pang of suffering required from you to perfect the atonement. Ye are perfect in Christ Jesus. Well, then, if the price be paid so fully, are we not completely and fully the Lord's ?

I will put this one thing very solemnly to you, and then leave the point. Beloved, if you are ready to confess that you were bought with a price, you must be equally ready to acknowledge that you cannot be your own, but belong to him who bought you: for, mark you, if the first be not true, then the second does not press; but if the first be true, namely, that Christ redeemed you, then the second is just as true, namely, that you are his, and must live as his, or otherwise you are defrauding him. If you are prepared to abjure your redemption, you may also abjure your allegiance to Christ; but if you are not willing to give up redemption by the blood—and I trust you are not, for that is to give up everything—then you must also agree to this, that you are not your own, or any other man's, but belong to Christ wholly; and for that cause you are bound to render him your whole self, spirit, soul, and body. It is only your reasonable service, for every man in reason expects to have what he has paid for; if Jesus has paid dearly for your soul, and if it be confessed that it is his, then let him have it, and be not you so base as to rob Christ of the reward of his heart's blood. "Will a man rob God?" Will you rob your Redeemer? Will you steal from him the purchase of his agonies, and deprive him of that which it cost him his life to buy? The claim is strong, but only gracious hearts will feel it. O blessed Spirit, cause us to feel it deeply now, and evermore to act under its constraining power.

III. This brings me to the third point, which is—as I have proved the Redeemer's claim—to show THE EXTENT OF IT. The claim of redemption is comprehensive. If you will kindly read the context of my first text you will see that it includes the body and the soul, "Glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are God's."

There the apostle speaks, first, of the body. Young man, read that passage when you get home, will you? I cannot read it now; but if you profess to be a Christian, recollect that this body of yours is holy, and it will rise again from the dead. I charge you, by the blood of Christ, never defile this body either by drunkenness or by lust. If it were the body of a common man, I would say to you for your own sake avoid these evils, but if you be a Christian I have a stronger argument, for your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Mark how strongly the apostle puts it, and try to feel the force of his words. You young men who come to London amidst its vices, read this passage, and shun everything that is akin to lewdness, or leads on to unchastity, for your bodies were bought with your Lord's life-blood, and they are not yours to trifle with. Shun the strange woman, her company, her wine, her glances, her house, her songs, and her resorts. Your bodies are not yours to injure by self-indulgence of any sort. Keep them pure and chaste for that heavenly Bridegroom who has bought them with his blood.

And then your soul is bought too. I was obliged to mention the body, because it is mentioned here, and it is so needful it should be kept pure. But keep the soul pure too. Christ has not bought these eyes that they should read novels calculated to lead me into vanity and vice, such as are published now-a-days. Christ has not bought this brain of mine that I may revel in the perusal of works of blasphemy and filthiness. He has not given me a mind that I may drag it through

the mire with the hope of washing it clean again, as some seem to do who imagine it to be the right thing to be always defiling themselves with scepticism and heresy that they may afterwards come to some minister to help them out of the dirt, or some wise friend to scrub the filth off. There will be enough of dust in going along the best roads : there is no need to go and roll in every dirt heap which foolish atheists and proud sceptics choose to put in the way. Do not defile your mind : it belongs to God : it is bought with the blood of Jesus.

Your whole manhood belongs to God if you are a Christian. Every faculty, every natural power, every talent, every possibility of your being, every capacity of your spirit—all were bought. It would be an awful thing for you if there were any part of you left out of the inventory. That would be a cursed part of the fabric of your being ; but it is all bought with blood, if you be indeed a redeemed man or woman. Therefore keep the whole for Jesus, for it belongs to Him.

The apostle draws from the fact that we are bought with a price in my first text the inference "Ye are not your own." It is clear as the sun at noon that if you are bought you are not your own. Now, if I am not my own, what does that negative declaration imply ?

It means, first, that I may not claim the right to do as I like. I am not my own. If I were my own I might do what I pleased ; but I am not my own. I am not to do what I please, but what Christ pleases. I am to please my Lord and Master in everything. My question in life is not how shall I get the most happiness to myself ; but how can I bring the most honour to him ? I am not my own : then I am not to follow my own passions. If I were my own I might fling the bridle on my neck and go whither I would, and no longer restrain my passions ; but since I am not my own, I must not, I cannot live after the flesh. Unless I am false to him that bought me, I dare not obey the bidding of my corruptions.

Neither if I am not my own may I follow my own tastes if in any way I should so bring grief to the people of God or dishonour to the name of Christ. I think, dear brethren, that one of the best tests of a Christian is that he will not only do no wrong, but he will not do that which might lead others to do wrong. Many things are lawful to us which are not expedient ; and often the Christian will say to himself, "Such a thing I think I might do if I were Alexander Selkirk on a desert island, and nobody saw me ; but insomuch as there are others who will take occasion to go beyond this act of mine, and weak ones who will be scandalised by what I do, God forbid I should make my brother to offend ; for I am not my own. If I were my own master, and had not my Lord and his cause to consider, I might do a thousand things ; but I will deny myself many lawful things for his sake, and the sake of his church, for I am not my own ; I will deny myself even allowable things that I may manifest that I do not belong to myself, but to him."

I am not my own. Then I must not trust my own reasonings. If I were my own teacher, then, of course, I should learn my lessons from my own book ; but I have a Rabbi, even Jesus, and I am resolved with meekness to learn of him. I thought I was wise once, but now I have become a little child, and I love to sit at Jesus' feet to learn of him, for

my reason I have surrendered to him. I believe what he teaches me because he says so, his *ipse dixit* stands to me instead of argument, for what he says must be true.

I am not my own, and so I must not seek my own ends. I must not live in this world that I may get rich, or that I may be famous. I may trade and get riches, but it must be that I may use them for him. I have a family to be kept. Yes, I must give my family to Christ, and then work to keep Christ's family, and so shall I be working for Christ. It is not my business to support myself, for the Lord is my Shepherd, but the Lord supports me through my own exertions, therefore do I even in common labour serve him. "Having food and raiment," I shall be therewith content: and I shall live to do good to the poor, and to the church of God, and to my fellow-men; when he sends me riches I shall take my alabaster box, and break it, and pour it on his head, and never count my treasures so well used as when I give them up to him. If, like Joseph of Arimathea, the believer possessed a new tomb wherein never man lay prepared for himself, he would count it best used if his Lord deigned to use it for his burial; gladly would he lend his chamber for Jesus to keep the passover, or his ass that his Lord might ride into Jerusalem thereon: for the saint holds all things ready at his Master's beck and call. His life is consecration. He has vowed unto the Lord, "I will work for him; I will suffer for him; I will write for him; I will live for him; I will even die for him: by some means or other I will show that I am not my own, or anything that I have." Oh, brethren, I would not like to have an unconsecrated hair of my head, or an unconsecrated hour of the day, or an unconsecrated faculty. Every mental power which God has given to a man ought to be used for God's cause. No faculty which is essentially natural to us may be excused from bowing its neck to the yoke of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes when I have said a humorous thing in preaching I have not asked you to excuse me, for if God has given me humour I mean to use it in his cause; many a man has been caught, and his ear arrested, and his attention won by a quaint remark. If any one can prove it is a wickedness, and not a natural faculty, I will abandon it; but it is a faculty of nature, and it ought to be consecrated and used for the cause of Christ. Whatever you can do, if it is a right thing to do, and God has made it a characteristic of your being, do it for Jesus. If you cannot speak like Mr. Moody, sing like Mr. Sankey; but somehow or other help to promote the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ; for you are not your own, "You are bought with a price."

In my second text the apostle brings forth another inference. Read the seventh chapter at the twenty-third verse: "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men:" by which he means this—As you are not to live for yourself, so you are not to make yourself the slave of other men, and give your powers up to any but to the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not even follow good men slavishly. Do not say, "I am of Paul; I am of Apollos; I am of Calvin; I am of Wesley." Did Calvin redeem you? Did Wesley die for you? Who is Calvin and who is Wesley but ministers by whom ye believed as the Lord gave unto you? Do not so surrender yourself to any

leadership that you rather follow the man than his Master. I will follow anybody if he goes Christ's way, but I will follow nobody, by the grace of God, if he does not go in that direction. Do not pin your faith to anybody's sleeve. Keep close to the Lord Jesus Christ. Ye are bought with a price; be ye not the servants of men. Do not give yourselves up to party spirit. It is a pity when a man cares only for politics, when the one grand thing he lives for is to return a Liberal for Parliament, or to get in a Radical, or to lift a Tory to the top of the poll. To live for a political party is unworthy of a man who professes to be a Christian. The most advanced politics beneath the sun are nothing compared with living for the bleeding Saviour, and spending one's self for the promotion of the immortal principles of the cross. We are not to give ourselves up to any scientific speculation, educational effort, or to any philanthropic enterprise so as to divert our minds from the grand old cause of Jesus and our God. A story is told of one of the early saints—I think it was Jerome—that he dreamed that he died, and went to the gates of heaven, and they said to him, "Who art thou?" And he said, "I am Jerome, a student of Scripture." And they said to him, "No, you are not; you are one Jerome, a student of Cicero;" for he had been much more accustomed to the study of Cicero and the great Latin writers, than to the reading of the Scriptures. He dreamed that, therefore, he was not permitted to enter heaven; and upon waking from his dream he put aside his classic books to make the Word of God the main study of his life. Alas! there are a great many people in the world who do not live for Christ. They are living for something else. The main thing with them is often a trifle light as air, a pursuit of almost infinitesimal value. I heard once a great divine saying to another great divine that he had spent a most important day on Snowdon, he considered it one of the most successful days of his life. Being in their line myself, I wondered what great revival services had been held on Snowdon, among the Welshmen. The eminent ecclesiastic said he had been many years on the watch, but had never till that day been able to satisfy himself. I wondered if he had been in prayer, watching for the conversion of the Welsh people. He said he found three different kinds of them, and was now sure they were quite distinct. Did he mean three kinds of religious inquirers whose cases he had at last been able to understand? Not he. He had been speaking of three species of beetles which he had met with after a day's searching. The minister of Christ had much joy over three beetles, but probably cared little for repenting sinners. And I am afraid there are many who spend their time in trifles as small as that, and perhaps far less innocent. Everything is a trifle to a man who is a Christian except the glorifying of Christ. "Felix has driven into an ambassador," said good old William Carey, when they told him that his son Felix had been made ambassador from the British court to the court of Burmah. He had been a poor missionary before, and now they had made him a great ambassador; but his father said, "He has driven into an ambassador." If a man who lives for Jesus and preaches the gospel could suddenly be transformed into the Emperor of Germany, it would be a frightful come-down for him. To live for

Jesus is the highest style of man. God grant we may realise that, for we are bought with a price.

If we do not belong to man, it follows that we ought not to follow the fashions of the world. Some people must be in the fashion, cost what it may; out of the fashion they feel they might as well be out of the world. It is almost death to them if they cannot dress and act after the manner of *society*; hence they run into extravagance, pride, show, and folly. The pride of life eats them up. When fashions go wrong it should be the Christian's fashion to go against the fashion.

Let no man be your master. If ye have masters according to the flesh, serve them with all faithfulness, as becomes you, giving unto them diligent service; but as to any master over your spirit, allow no one to be so; consciences were made for God alone. Bow not down your heart and conscience before man, but be free, for "you are bought with a price."

To close. We are, then, it seems, wholly Christ's. Christ, then, my brethren and sisters, if we are as we should be, is Lord of our time. We may not say, "I have an hour of my own to waste." It is Christ's time. He is Lord of our household; we do not claim to be paramount there, but we say, "Lord, these are thy children; help us to bring them up for thee. Our household is thine. Lord, grant that by family prayer and by holy example we may make our family to be 'Holiness to the Lord.'" You will go out to business and say, "This business is not mine; it is my Master's." You will not trade in any dishonest way if you do that. It will be holy trading. The farmer goes to the field, and says, "This is the Redeemer's field, and what profit I shall make from it is his profit." If he feels in that way his actions will be kind, and generous, and right, and God-fearing. I would that every young man felt, "If I have talents they are God's talents, to be used for him." Young men will join clubs and societies, and become most energetic members; but when they join churches, we get the distinguished honour of having their names on the book to encumber the church-roll, and not much more, very often. That is not right if they belong to Jesus.

Christian people ought in all they do to be looking out for opportunities of serving Christ. I have heard of a Jew who, going forth to trade, and having a choice between two towns, asked "Where is the synagogue?" and when he had found there was a synagogue in one town and not in the other, he gave the preference to that in which he could worship with his brethren. It ought to be so with the Christian. But often Christian men forget even to inquire about such matters. They make money, and go and live out of London, and where do they select their residence? They say, "Here is a beautiful view, and a respectable neighbourhood." But there is no place of worship where they can take their children, and where they can go themselves,—does that always influence them? I fear not. They look to other matters first. I have known them go to places where they could not possibly get any good, and they have not even tried to do any. I like to hear a Christian man say, "There is a destitute village. Now, if I live there I may build a little place of worship, and so I may do good." This is an object worth aiming at; and if the wealthy Chris-

tians of England, when they remove from large centres of population, always set to work to try and spread the gospel round about where they live, they would be like seed sown in the ground or like salt scattered among society to preserve the land. Our first aim in life should be to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am afraid I am rapping some of you a little hard, or perhaps you will call it treading on your corns. You should not have corns, you know, and then I could not tread upon them. If you are not doing right, and anything I say comes very closely home, it ought to come home. Dear brother, try to mend. Find not fault with the preacher because he finds out your faults. Go and amend. There came into this house some years ago a dear brother, an earnest Christian young man, and I was preaching some such sermon as this; and he felt that he had not been living for Christ. He went back to the city where he lived, and he began to preach in the street. He continued to preach and God blessed him, and he developed into an earnest and talented servant of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose name is very dear to you all. One of the best days' work I ever did was to be the means of calling him out to such a service. Is there not some young man of that kind here? May there not be here present a Christian woman, with ability, and talent, and education, who ought to be teaching young women, and doing good, and bringing them to the Saviour? My dear sister, you are not your own; you are not your own. If you were, I think you would be quite right in taking your ease on the Sabbath-day, and making yourself comfortable in the week. But you are not your own; you are not your own. The blood of Jesus has bought every particle of you. Will you not devote yourself to him? Will you not pray to make your consecration more practical than it has hitherto been from this time forth? See the sacred blood mark is on every part of your spirit and your body, do not try to hide it. Give up all to Jesus, that while you live, and when you die, you may fight a good fight, and finish your course, and have it said to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

O ye who know nothing about being bought with a price, you will be lost unless you do know it. If Christ has not bought you, hell will receive you, and despair will be your portion. May God grant you may know the power of redemption, through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Corinthians **ix.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—658, 663, 360.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

NOW.—A SERMON FOR YOUNG MEN AND YOUNG WOMEN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 19TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off."—Ezekiel xii. 27.

ONE would have thought that if the glorious Lord condescended to send his servants to speak to men of the way of salvation, all mankind would delight to hear the message. We should naturally conclude that the people would immediately run together in eager crowds to catch every word, and would be obedient at once to the heavenly command. But, alas! it has not been so. Man's opposition to God is too deep, too stubborn for that. The prophets of old were compelled to cry, "Who hath believed our report?" and the servants of God in later times found themselves face to face with a stiff-necked generation, who resisted the Holy Ghost as did their fathers. Men display great ingenuity in making excuses for rejecting the message of God's love. They display marvellous skill, not in seeking salvation, but in fashioning reasons for refusing it; they are dexterous in avoiding grace, and in securing their own ruin. They hold up first this shield and then the other, to ward off the gracious arrows of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which are only meant to slay the deadly sins which lurk in their bosoms. The evil argument which is mentioned in the text has been used from Ezekiel's day right down to the present moment, and it has served Satan's turn in ten thousand cases. By its means men have delayed themselves into hell. The sons of men, when they hear of the great atonement made upon the cross by the Lord Jesus, and are bidden to lay hold upon eternal life in him, still say concerning the gospel, "The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of times that are far off." That is to say, they pretend that the matters whereof we speak are not of immediate importance, and may safely be postponed. They imagine that religion is for the weakness

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of the dying and the infirmity of the aged, but not the living and women. They meet our pressing invitation, "All things are ready, come ye to the supper," with the reply, "Religion is meant to prepare us for eternity, but we are far off from it as yet, and are still in the hey-day of our being; there is plenty of time for those due preparations for death. Your religion smells of the vault and the worm. Let us be merry while we may. There will be room for more serious considerations when we have enjoyed life a little, or have become established in business, or can retire to live upon our savings. Religion is for the sere and yellow leaf of the year's fall, when life is fading, but not for the opening hours of spring, when the birds are pairing and the primroses smiling upon the returning sun. You prophesy of things that are for many days to come, and of times that are far off." Very few young people may have said as much as this, but that is the secret thought of many; and with this they resist the admonition of the Holy Ghost, who saith, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." They put off the day of conversion, as if it were a day of tempest and terror, and not, as it really is, a day most calm, most bright, the bridal of the soul with heaven.

Let every unconverted person recollect that God knows what his excuse is for turning a deaf ear to the voice of a dying Saviour's love. You may not have spoken it to yourself so as to put it into words; you might not even dare to do so, lest your conscience should be too much startled: but God knows it all. He sees the hollowness, the folly, and the wickedness of your excuses. He is not deceived by your vain words, but makes short work with your apologies for delay. Remember the parables of our Lord, and note that when the man of one talent professed to think his master a hard man, he took him at his word, and out of his own mouth condemned him; and in the case of the invited guests who pleaded their farms and their merchandise as excuses, no weight was attached to what they said, but the sentence went forth, "None of these men that are bidden shall taste of my supper." God knows the frivolity of your plea for delay, he knows that you yourself are doubtful about it, and dare not stand to it so as to give it anything like a solemn consideration. Very hard do you try to deceive yourself into an easy state of conscience concerning it, but in your inmost soul you are ashamed of your own falsehoods. My business at this time is, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to deal with your consciences, and to convince you yet more thoroughly that delay is unjustifiable, for the gospel has present demands upon you, and you must not say, "The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off."

I. For, first, *granted for a moment that the message we bring to you has most to do with the future state, yet even then the day is not far off, neither is there so great a distance between now and then, that you can afford to wait.* Suppose that you are spared for threescore years and ten. Young man, suppose that God spares you in your sins till the snows of many winters shall whiten your head; young woman, suppose that your now youthful countenance shall still escape the grave until wrinkles are upon your brow; yet, still, how short will your life be! You, perhaps, think seventy years a long period, but those who are

seventy, in looking back, will tell you that their age is an hand's breadth. I, who am but forty, feel at this time that every year flies more swiftly than the last ; and months and weeks are contracted into twinklings of the eye. The older one grows, the shorter one's life appears. I do not wonder that Jacob said, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been," for he spake as an extremely old man. Man is short-lived compared with his surroundings, he comes into the world and goes out of it, as a meteor flashes through yonder skies which have remained the same for ages. Listen to the brook which murmurs as it flows, and the meditative ear will hear it warble,

"Men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever."

Look at yonder venerable oak, which has for five hundred years battled with the winds, and what an infant one seems when reclining beneath its shade ! Stand by some giant rock, which has confronted the tempests of the ages, and you feel like the insect of an hour. There are persons here to-night of seventy years of age who look back to the days of their boyhood as if they were but yesterday. Ask them, and they will tell you that their life seems to have been little more than a wink of the eye ; it has gone like a dream, or a lightning's flash—

"What is life ? 'tis but a vapour,
Soon it vanishes away."

Therefore do not say, "These things are for a far-off time;" for even if we could guarantee to you the whole length of human existence, it is but a span.

But there comes upon the heels of this a reflection never to be forgotten—that not one man among us can promise himself, with anything like certainty, that he shall ever see threescore years and ten. We may survive, and by reason of strength we may creep up to fourscore years ; yet not one of us can be sure that he shall do so ; the most of us will assuredly be gone long before that age. Nay, more, we cannot promise that we shall see half that length of time. You young men and women cannot be certain that you shall reach middle life. Let me check myself ! What am I talking of ? You cannot be certain that you will see this year out, and hear the bells ring in a new year. Yea, close upon you as to-morrow is, boast not yourselves of it, for it may never come ; or, should it come, you know not what it may bring forth to you, perhaps a coffin or a shroud. Ay, and this very night, when you close your eyes and rest your head upon your pillow, reckon not too surely that you shall ever again look on that familiar chamber, or go forth from it to the pursuits of life. It is clear, then, that the things which make for your peace are not matters for a far-off time, the frailty of life makes them necessities of this very hour. You are not far from your grave, you are nearer to it than when this discourse began : some of you are far nearer than you think.

To some this reflection comes with remarkable emphasis, for your occupation has enough of danger about it every day to furnish death with a hundred roads to convey you to his prison-house in the sepulchre. Can you look through a newspaper without meeting with the words

"fatal accident," or "sudden death"? Travelling has many dangers and even to cross the street is perilous. Men die at home, and when engaged about their lawful callings many are met by death. How true is this of those who go down to the sea in ships, or descend into the bowels of the earth in mines! But, indeed, no occupations are secure from death; a needle can kill as well as a sword; a scald, a burn, a fall, may end our lives, quite as readily as a pestilence or a battle. Does your business lead you to climb a ladder, it is no very perilous matter, but have you never heard of one who missed his footing and fell, never to rise again? You work amidst the materials of a rising building: have you never heard of stones that have fallen and have crushed the workers?

"Dangers stand thick through all the ground
To push us to the tomb,
And fierce diseases wait around
To hurry mortals home."

Notwithstanding all that can be done by sanitary laws, fevers are not unknown, and deadly strokes which fell men to the ground in an instant, as a butcher slays an ox, are not uncommon. Death has already removed many of your former companions. You have ridden into the battle of life, like the soldiers in the charge at Balaclava; and, young as you are in this warfare, you have seen saddles emptied right and left around you; you survive, but death has grazed you. The arrow of destruction has gone whizzing by your ear to find another mark; have you never wondered that it spared you? Amongst this congregation there are persons of delicate constitution. It grieves me to see so many fair daughters of our land with the mark of consumption upon their cheeks. Full well I know that lurid flame upon the countenance, and that strange lustre of the eye—signs of exhausting fires feeding upon life and consuming it too soon. Young men and women, many of you from the condition of your bodily frames can only struggle on till middle life, and scarcely that; for beyond thirty or forty you cannot survive. I fear that some of you have even in walking to this place felt a suspicious weariness, which argues exhaustion and decline. How can *you* say, when we talk to *you* about preparing to die, that we are talking about things that are far off? Dear souls, do not be so foolish. I implore you let these warnings lead you to decision. Far be it from me to cause you needless alarm, but is it needless? I am sure I love you too well to distress you without cause, but is there not cause enough? Come now, I press you most affectionately, answer me and say, does not your own reason tell you that my anxiety for you is not misplaced? Ought you not at once to lay to heart your Redeemer's call, and obey your Saviour's appeal? The time is short, catch the moments as they fly and hasten to be blest.

Remember also, once again, that even if you knew that you should escape from accident and fever and sudden death, yet there is one grand event that we too often forget, which may put an end to your day of mercy on a sudden. Have you never heard that Jesus Christ of Nazareth who was crucified on Calvary, died on the cross, and was laid in the tomb? Do you not know that he rose again the third day,

and that after he had spent a little while with his disciples, he took them to the top of the Mount of Olives, and there before their eyes ascended into heaven, a cloud hiding him from their view? Have you forgotten the words of the angels, who said, "This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"? Jesus will certainly come a second time to judge the world. Of that day and of that hour knoweth no man—no, not the angels of God. He will come as a thief in the night to an ungodly world; they shall be eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage, just as they were when Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came and swept them all away. In a moment—we cannot tell when, perhaps it may be ere next the words escape my lips—a sound far louder than any mortal voice will be heard above the clamours of worldly traffic, ay, and above the roaring of the sea. That sound as of a trumpet will proclaim the day of the Son of Man. "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh: go ye out to meet him," will sound throughout the church; and to the world there will ring out this clarion note, "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which crucified him." Jesus may come to-night. If he were to do so, would you then tell me that I am talking of far-off things? Did not Jesus say, "Behold, I come quickly!" and has not his church been saying, "Even so, come Lord Jesus"? His tarrying may be long to us, but to God it will be brief. We are to stand hourly watching and daily waiting for the coming of the Lord from heaven. Oh, I pray you do not say that the Lord delayeth his coming, for that was the language of the wicked servant who was cut in pieces, and it is the mark of the mockers of the last days, that they say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Be ye not mockers, lest your hands be made strong; but listen to the undoubted voice of prophecy and of the word of God, "Behold, I come quickly." "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

Now, then, it is clear enough that even if the gospel message did concern only our life in another world, yet still it is unwise for men to say, "The vision is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off."

II. But, secondly, I have to remind you that *our message really deals with the present*. The blessings of the gospel have as much to do with this present life as with existence beyond the tomb.

For observe, first, we are sent to plead with you, young men and women, and tenderly to remind you that you are at this hour acting unjustly and unkindly towards your God. He made you, and you do not serve him; he has kept you alive, and you are not obedient to him. He has sent the word of his gospel to you, and you have not received it; he has sent his only begotten Son, and you have despised him. This injustice is a thing of the present; and the appeal we make to you about it is, that in all reason such conduct should come to an end. Oh, may God's Holy Spirit help you to end it! If I feel that I have done any man an injustice, I am eager to set it right, I would not wait till to-morrow, I wish to make him amends at once. Yes, and even when I have forgotten to render assistance to some needy widow, I

chide myself, and feel uneasy till I have attended to the matter. Do you not feel the same? Would you wilfully wrong or neglect another? I feel sure you would not. How is it, then, that you can be content to be unjust to God, cruel to the dear Lover of the souls of men, and antagonistic to the loving pleadings of the Holy Spirit? That first chapter of Isaiah—you remember it, how striking it is! Why, if men had hearts that were at all tender it would break them. Read it. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider." It is the wail of God himself over man's unkindness to his Maker! Young man of honour, young man of integrity, does nothing speak to your conscience in this? "Will a man rob God?" You would not rob your employer. You would not like to be thought unfaithful or dishonest towards man; and yet your God, your God, your God—is he to be treated so basely, notwithstanding all his goodness? As Jesus said, "For which of these works do you stone me?" so does Jehovah say, "I have made you; I have kept the breath in your nostrils; I have fed you all your life long; and for which of all these good things do you live without me, and neglect me, and perhaps even curse my name, and sin with a high hand against my sacred law?" Now, can you think it right to remain in so wantonly unjust a course of life as this? Can it be right to continue to wrong your God and grieve his matchless love? Provoke him no more, I pray you. Let conscience lead you to feel that you have dealt ill with the Lord, and come ye to him for forgiveness and change of heart. O Spirit of God, make this appeal to be felt by these beloved youths and maidens!

Again, our message has to do with the present, for we would affectionately remind you that you are now at enmity with your best friend—the friend to whose love you owe everything. You have grieved him, and are, without cause, his enemy; can you bear this thought? I know a little child who had done something wrong, and her kind father talked to her, and at last, as a punishment, he said to her in a very sad voice, "I cannot kiss you to-night, for you have grieved me very much." That broke her little heart. Though not a stroke had been laid upon her, she saw sorrow in her dear father's face, and she could not endure it. She pleaded and wept and pleaded again to be forgiven. It was thought wise to withhold the kiss, and she was sent to bed, for she had done very wrong; but there was no sleep for those weeping eyes, and when mother went up to that little one's chamber she heard frequent sobs and sighs, and a sorrowful little voice said, "I was very, very naughty, but pray forgive me, and ask dear father to give me a kiss." She loved her father, and she could not bear that he should be grieved. Child of mercy, erring child of the great Father of spirits, canst thou bear to live for ever at enmity with the loving Father? "Would he forgive me?" say you. What makes you ask the question? Is it that you do not know how good he is? Has he not portrayed himself as meeting his prodigal son and falling upon his neck and kissing him? Before the child had reached the father,

the father had reached the child. The father was eager to forgive, and therefore, when the son was yet a great way off his father saw him, and ran, and had compassion. Say no longer that we are talking of things of a far-off time? It is not so. I am speaking of that which I pray may be true to you to-night, that you may not remain enemies to God even another hour, but now may become his dear repenting children, and fly into your tender Father's arms.

I have to remind you, however, of much more than this, namely, that you are this night in danger. On account of your treatment of God, and your remaining an enemy to him, he will surely visit you in justice and punish you for your transgressions. He is a just God, and every sin committed is noted in his book; and there it stands recorded against his judgment day. The danger you are in is that you may this moment go down into the pit; and while sitting in that pew may bow your head in death and appear before your Maker in an instant, to receive the just reward of your sins. We come to tell you that there is immediate pardon for all the sins of those who will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that if you will believe in Jesus, your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you. Know ye not the story (ye have heard it many a time) that the Lord Jesus took upon himself the sins of all who trust him, and suffered, in their room and stead, the penalty due to their sins? He was our substitute, and as such he died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. He laid down his life for us, that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Will you refuse the salvation so dearly purchased but so freely presented? Will you not accept it here, and now? Can you bear the burden of your sins? Are you content to abide for a single hour in peril of eternal punishment? Can you bear to be slipping down into the open jaws of hell as you now are? Remember God's patience will not last for ever; long enough have you provoked him. All things are weary of you. The very earth on which you stand groans beneath the indignity of bearing a sinner upon its surface. So long as you are an enemy to God, the stones of the field are against you, and all creation threatens you. It is a wonder that you do not sink at once to destruction. For this cause we would have you pardoned *now* and made free from divine wrath *now*. The peril is immediate, the Lord grant that so the rescue may be. Do I hear you say, "But may pardon be had at once? Is Jesus Christ a present Saviour? We thought that we might perhaps find him when we came to die, or might obtain a hope of mercy after living a long life of seeking." It is not so. Free grace proclaims immediate salvation from sin and misery. Whosoever looks to Jesus at this very moment shall have his sins forgiven. At the instant he believes in the Lord Jesus, the sinner shall cease to be in danger of the fires of hell. The moment a man turns his eye of faith to Jesus Christ he is saved from the wrath to come. It is present salvation that we preach to you, and the present comfort of that present salvation, too.

Many other reasons tend to make this weighty matter exceedingly pressing; and among them is this, that there is a disease in your heart, the disease of sin, and it needs immediate cure. I do not hear persons

say, if they discover an incipient disease in their systems, that they will wait a while till the evil is more fully developed, and will then resort to a physician. The most of us have sense enough to try to check disease at once. Young man, thou hast a leprosy upon thee. Young woman, thou hast a dreadful malady within thy heart. Dost thou not desire to be healed now? Jesus can give thee immediate healing if thou believest in him. Wilt thou hesitate to be made whole? Dost thou love thy mortal malady? Is hideous sin so dear to thee? O that thou wouldst cry to be saved immediately, then will Jesus hear thee. His Spirit will descend upon thee, and cleanse thee, give thee a new heart, and a right spirit, yea, and make thee whole from this time henceforth and for ever; canst thou wish to have so great a blessing postponed? Surely a sick man can never be cured too soon.

The gospel which we preach to you will also bring you present blessings. In addition to present pardon and present justification, it will give you present regeneration, present adoption, present sanctification, present access to God, present peace through believing, and present help in time of trouble, and it will make you even for this life doubly happy. It will be wisdom for your way, strength for your conflict, and comfort for your sorrow. If I had to die like a dog I would still wish to be a Christian. If there were no hereafter—though the supposition is not to be tolerated—yet still let me live for and with Jesus, my beloved Lord. Balaam chose the righteous man's death, I choose it too, but quite as much do I choose his life, for to have the love of God in the heart, to have peace with God, to be able to look up to heaven with confidence, and talk to my heavenly Father in childlike trustfulness is a present joy and comfort worth more than worlds. Young men and women, in preaching to you the gospel, we are preaching that which is good for this life as well as for the life to come. If you believe in Jesus you will be saved now, on the spot, and you will now enjoy the unchanging favour of God, so that you will go your way henceforth not to live as others do, but as the chosen of God, beloved with special love, enriched with special blessings, to rejoice every day till you are taken up to dwell where Jesus is. Present salvation is the burden of the Lord's message to you, and therefore it is not true, but infamously false, that the vision is for many days to come, and the prophecy for times that are far off. Is there not reason in my pleadings? If so, yield to them. Can you answer these arguments? If not, I pray you cease delaying. Again would I implore the Holy Spirit to lead you to immediate decision.

III. My third point is, that *I shall not deny, but I shall glory rather in admitting, that the gospel has to do with the future.* Albeit, that it is not exclusively a revelation for far-off times, yet it is filled with glorious hopes and bright prospects concerning things to come.

The gospel of Jesus Christ has to do with the whole of a young man's life. If you receive Jesus Christ you will not merely have him to-night, but that faith by which you receive him will operate upon your whole existence throughout time and eternity. Dear young friends, if you are saved while yet you are young you will find religion to be a great preventive of sin. What a blessing it is not to have been daubed with the slime of Sodom, never to have had our bones

broken by actual vice. Many who have been saved from a life of crime will nevertheless be spiritual cripples for life ! To be snatched out of the vortex of vice is cause for great gratitude, but to have been kept out of it is better. It is doubly well, if the grace of God comes upon us while still we are untainted by the pollution of the world, and have not gone into excess of riot. Before dissolute habits have undermined the constitution, and self-indulgence has degraded the mind, it is above all things well to have the heart renewed. Prevention is better than cure, and grace gives both. Thank God that you are still young, and pray earnestly that you may now receive grace to cleanse your way by taking heed thereto, according to his word.

Grace will also act as a preservative as well as a preventive. The good thing which God will put in you will keep you. I bless God I have not to preach a temporary salvation to you at this time. That which charmed me about the gospel when I was a lad was its power to preserve from sinning. I saw some of my school companions who had been highly commended for their character, and were a little older than myself, become sad offenders when they left home. I used to hear sad stories of their evil actions when they had gone to London to be apprenticed, or to take positions in large establishments, and I reasoned thus with myself : " When I leave my father's house I shall be tempted, too, and I have the same heart that they have, indeed, I have not been even as good as they have been ; the probabilities are, therefore, that I shall plunge into sin as they have done." I felt horrified with that. I could not bear that I should cause my mother to shed tears over a dissolute son, or break my father's heart with debauchery. The thought could not be endured, and when I heard that whosoever believed in the Lord Jesus Christ should be saved, I understood that he would be saved from sinning, and I laid hold upon Jesus to preserve me from sin, and he has done it. I committed my character to Christ, and he has preserved me to this day, and I believe he will not let me go. I recommend to you, young men, a character-insurance, in the form of believing in Jesus Christ. Dear young woman, may that modest cheek of yours never need to blush for deed of shame ; may your delicate purity of feeling never be lost through gross defiling sin : but remember, it may be so unless the Lord keeps you : I commend to you the blessed preserving power of faith in Christ Jesus, which will secure for you the Holy Spirit to dwell in you and abide in you, and sanctify you all your days. I know I speak to some who shudder at the thought of vice. Trained as you have been by Christian parents, and under the holiest influences, you would rather die than act as some who disgrace their father's name ; I know you would. But you must not trust your own hearts ; you may yet become as bad as others or worse than they unless your natures are renewed, and only Jesus Christ can do that, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Whosoever believeth in him has passed from death unto life ; he shall not live in sin, but he shall be preserved in holiness even to the end.

My dear young friends, if God shall be pleased to change your hearts to-night, as I pray he may, you will be prepared for the future. You have not fully entered into the battle of life yet. You have your way to make, your professions and trades to choose. You, young

women, are still under the parental wing ; you have domestic relationships yet to form. Now, consider how well prepared you will be for life's work and service if you give your hearts to Jesus. Young man, you will be the right man to enter a large establishment : with the grace of God in your heart you will be a blessing there. Though surrounded by her snares in this wicked city, the strange woman will in vain hunt for your precious life ; and other vices will be unable to pollute you. Young woman, you will have wisdom to choose for your life's companion no mere fop and fool, but one who loves the Lord as you will do, with whom you may hope to spend happy and holy days. You will have placed within yourself resources of joy and pleasure which will never fail ; there will be a well of living water within you which will supply you with joy and comfort and consolation, even amid trial and distress. You will be prepared for whatever is to come. A young Christian is fit to be made an emperor or a servant, if God shall call him to either post. If you want the best materials for a model prince, or a model peasant, you shall find it in the child of God ; only, mark you, the man who is a child of God is less likely to sink into utter destitution, because he will be saved from the vices of extravagance and idleness which are the frequent causes of poverty ; and, probably, on the other hand, he is less likely to become a prince, for seldom has God lifted his own children to places so perilous. You will be ready, young man, for any future, if your heart be right with God. And do you know when I think of you, and of what the Lord may make of you, I feel an intense respect, as well as love, for you. I hope none of us will be lacking in respect to old age, it is honourable, and it is to be esteemed and revered ; but I feel frequently inclined to do homage to your youth. When a celebrated tutor entered his school-room, he always took off his hat to his boys, because as he said he did not know which of them might yet turn out to be a poet, a bishop, a lord chancellor, or a prime minister. When I look at young men and women, I feel much the same, for I do not know what they are to be. I may be addressing to-night a Livingstone, or a Moffat. I may be speaking to-night to a John Howard, or a Wilberforce : I may be addressing a Mrs. Judson, or an Elizabeth Fry. I may be speaking to some whom God will kindle into great lights to bless the sons of men for many a day, and afterwards to shine as the stars for ever and ever. But you cannot shine if you are not lighted. You cannot bless God and bless the sons of men unless God first blesses you. Unregenerate, you are useless. Born again, you will be born for usefulness, but while you are unconverted your usefulness is being lost. I will not insinuate that I expect every one here to become famous. It is not even desirable ; but I do know this, that every one whose heart shall be given to Jesus, will be so useful and so necessary to the Church and to the world, that this world without them would lack a benefactor, and heaven's company would be incomplete unless they joined its ranks. Oh, the value of a redeemed soul ! The importance of a young life ! I wish I could multiply myself into a thousand bodies that I might come round and take the hand of every young person here, as he or she shall leave the Tabernacle, and say, " By the preciousness of your life, by the hallowed

uses to which you may be put, by the good that you may do, and by the glory you may bring to God, do not think of pardon and grace as things of the future ; but now, even now, lay hold of them, and they will become to you the great power by which you shall benefit your generation and go down to the grave with honour."

When I grow grey, if God shall spare me—may I see around me some of you with whom I speak to-day, who shall be some twenty years younger than myself, of whom I shall say, "My former deacons and elders are either very old or have gone home to heaven ; the dear men of God who were with me when I was forty years of age have passed away ; but those whom I preached to on that night in March, 1874, have come to fill their places. Those dear sisters who used to conduct the classes, teach the school, and manage the various societies for the poor, have gone, and we have followed them to their graves and wept over them, but here come their daughters to fill their places." I pray that names honoured in our churches may never die out from our midst ; may the fathers live again in their children. It may not be my honour to be succeeded in this pulpit by one of my own sons, greatly as I would rejoice if it might be so, but at least I hope they will be here in this church to serve their father's God, and to be regarded with affection by you for the sake of him who spent his life in your midst. I pray that all my honoured brethren may have sons and daughters in the church—ay, from generation to generation may there be those in our assemblies—of whom it shall be said, "These are of the old stock : they keep up the old name." I wish this felicity to all the churches, that instead of the fathers may be the children whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. Brethren of my own age, we shall soon die : God grant us to die at our posts. The standard-bearer will fall, and in his last embrace he will press the standard to his heart, for it is dearer than life to him. But courage, my brethren, our sons will urge on the sacred war, and carry on the good old cause to victory. What say ye, dear ones ? Do not your hearts say "Amen" ? Young men, will you not take up the blood-stained banner when we shall go our ways ? Sons and daughters of the faithful, will you desert your fathers' God ? Oh, will it be that he whom we love shall be despised by you ? Will you turn your back on the Christ who was all in all to us ? No. It cannot be. Be of good cheer, Abraham, Isaac shall succeed thee, Jacob shall rise up to serve thy God, Jacob shall live to see his son Joseph, and even to bless Ephraim and Manasseh ; and so from generation to generation shall the Lord be praised.

Thus far concerning this life, but now let me remind you, dear young friends, that if your hearts be given to Christ you need not tremble about the end of life. You may look forward to it with hope. It will come. Thank God, it will come ! Have you never wished that you could ride to heaven in a chariot of fire, like Elijah ? I did once till I reflected that if a chariot of fire should come for me I should be more afraid to get into it than to lie down and die upon my bed ; and of the two one might prefer to die, for to die in the Lord is to be made like to our glorious Head. I see no joy in the hope of escaping death. Jesus died, and so let me die. On his dear face the seal of

death was set, so let it be on mine, that I may talk of resurrection as they cannot who shall be changed at his coming. You need not be afraid to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Young people, whether you die in youth or old age, if you are resting in Jesus you shall sit upon the banks of Jordan singing. As our friends sang last night:—

“Never mind the river.”

The parting song will be sweet, but oh, the glory! Oh, the glory! I will not try to paint it. Who can? The judgment will come, but you will not tremble at it. On the right hand shall you stand, for who can condemn those for whom Christ has died? The conflagration of the globe will come, the elements shall melt with fervent heat; but you will not tremble, for you shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air, and so shall you be for ever with the Lord. Hell shall swallow up the unjust, they shall go down alive into the pit; but you shall not tremble for that, for you are redeemed by the precious blood. The millennial glory, whatever that may be; and the reign with Christ, and the triumph over death and hell; and the giving up of the kingdom to God, even the Father, when God shall be all in all; and eternity with all its infinite glory; these shall be all yours. If you had to go through hell to reach this glory, it would be worth the cost! But you have not to do any such thing; you have only to believe in Jesus, and even faith is the Lord's own gracious gift. “Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.” This is the gospel. Look! Look! Look! 'Tis but a look. Look, blear-eyed soul, thou who canst scarce see for ignorance! Look, thou whose eyes are swimming in tears! Look, thou who seest hell before thee! Look, thou who art sinking into the jaws of perdition! Look ye ends of the earth, that are farthest gone in sin, if such be here! Ye who are plunged deep in iniquity—look! 'Tis Jesus on the cross ye are bidden to look at—yea, Jesus at the right hand of God, the crucified Son of Man exalted at the right hand of the Father. Look unto him, and be ye saved, for he is God, and beside him there is none else.

God grant to you to look to Jesus, even now, for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xviii. 1—23.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—95 (Ver. II.), 497, 492.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE CHRISTIAN'S MOTTO.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 22ND, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I do always those things that please him."—John viii. 29.

OUR Lord Jesus stood alone as the advocate of right and truth in the days when he dwelt among men. It is true he had a few followers, but they were so slow to learn, and so weak in action, that they rather increased his difficulties than rendered him assistance. He was a solitary champion in the midst of armies of foes. Those foes were powerful, cunning, cruel, and exceedingly active, yet he was calm and unmoved, and faced them without fear; he was never put to the blush by them, and never turned his back in retreat. Our Lord was victorious all through the campaign of his ministry; I may say of him that he went forth conquering and to conquer, and on the cross he gained his crowning victory.

Since you also will meet with enemies, would you learn to be as calm as he? Since difficulties must beset your pathway, would you possess the same strength as he? Would you, in fact, live as he lived, and, finishing your course, would you enter into his joy? Then study well the records of his sublime career, and you will see that the secret of his power was the presence of his God,—“he that sent me is with me,” and the secret of his comfort was fellowship with Jehovah,—“he hath not left me alone.” If you would know how you can enjoy the presence and fellowship of the Lord, and all the power and comfort which come thereby, the Saviour tells you the secret in the following words: “For I do always those things that please him.” If we would have God with us, we must be agreed with him. “Shall two walk together unless they be agreed?” Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him” (John xiv. 21). To do the things which

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please God is the way to secure his presence and consequent power and happiness.

I shall at this time endeavour to set forth the Saviour before you all under two aspects: as *the mediator*, in which office we delight to trust him; and as *the model*, in which character we endeavour to imitate him. May the Holy Spirit so illuminate our minds, that under both aspects our souls may be greatly blessed as we gaze upon our Lord.

I. First, then, as *THE MEDIATOR*. He says of himself as God-Man, the appointed Redeemer, the sent Son of God, "I do always those things that please him." This was and is true of our Lord every way. Of his incarnation we read those memorable words: "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." In the same psalm he describes himself as a servant, whose ears had been opened or bored that he might be a servant for ever: and in another place he says, "He wakeneth morning by morning; he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." The Son of God was willing to come to earth to do his Father's will, and his birth at Bethlehem was one of the points in which he pleased the Father. So also he was doing the things which pleased the Father during his obscure life, as the carpenter's son. We know but little of it, and it is vain, by pencil or tongue, to attempt to paint what Scripture has left beneath the veil of silence; but we know thus much of it, that he was about "his Father's business" and that "he grew in favour with God and man." He was the "holy child Jesus," and therefore must have done the things which pleased God. At the end of his retirement, when he came forth at thirty years of age, the Father set the seal upon the past as well as bore witness to the present, when he spoke with an audible voice from the excellent glory, and said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." His subjection to his earthly parents, and his reverent silence till the hour was come to speak, were things which pleased the Father.

When he entered upon his public and active service he began well, for he commenced by an act of which he said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It was at his baptism that the Father expressed his pleasure in him, and the Spirit descended upon him. His baptism was an emblem and a type of the perfect obedience which he intended to render: it set forth his immersion into depths of suffering, his sinking in death and burial, his rising again from the tomb, and his ascension into heaven for us. Doubtless, all these are to be seen by the spiritual eye in the symbolic rite practised in Jordan's wave. Blessed are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

Immediately after this our Lord was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and was tempted of the devil; his going thither, and his threefold victory over the tempter, were well-pleasing to God. Did not Jehovah send his angels to minister to him; and what was this but a token that he had pleased God by defeating the arch-enemy?

Throughout his life our Lord was always acceptable to God, and fulfilled in very deed that ancient word of the prophet Esaias, in his forty-second chapter, at the twenty-first verse, in which he spoke and said, "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will

magnify the law and make it honourable." He magnified the ceremonial law by coming under it, and observing it until the time when it passed away. He magnified the moral law, for he obeyed every precept both of the first and of the second table, and could say to all his accusers, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" He was perfect in all his ways. There is not one action upon which a question can be raised by any candid observer as to the exactness of its justice, and its full conformity to the perfect law of right and love. He did always the things which pleased God, and he had God's attestation of this; for though the splendour of his Godhead was veiled when he dwelt here, yet gleams of it burst forth here and there, as if the Father would let men know that the lowly Mediator was still great with God. See him on Tabor where he was transfigured, and you see how the Father loved him. It was the man Christ Jesus who there talked with Moses and Elias, while Peter and James and John were eye-witnesses of his majesty, of which Peter has written, "For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." It is clear, then, that the glory of our Lord was looked upon by the apostles as a token of the Father's love to him. Listen also to that voice which answered him out of heaven when he prayed, "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The miracles, also, proved his acceptableness with God, for they were not only evidences of his own power, but tokens of his Father's good pleasure, and therefore Peter in his famous sermon spoke in this fashion, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." Everywhere the Father gave forth signs that he had not left him alone, but was with him, because he did his will. As a servant, for our sakes, he pleased not himself, but suffered the zeal of his Father's house to eat him up. From the first day in which he spoke to John at the Jordan, to the day in which he was taken up into his glory, he did always the things that pleased God.

His death, which was his own voluntary act, was the most pleasing of all, if degrees there could be where all was perfect. He was indeed well pleasing to the Father when rising up from supper he said, "Let us go hence," and he went without a murmur to be "obedient to death, even the death of the cross." That bloody sweat in Gethsemane, when he conquered nature's fears and took the cup of trembling, saying, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," was not that the doing of the things which pleased God? Do you not remember that notable saying of the prophet, "It pleased the Father to bruise him"? There was a divine satisfaction given to the Father in the willing, the submissive, the believing, the triumphant pangs of Jesus. On Calvary he was pressed with grief beyond measure, yet he did not fail to bear all the pleasure of the Lord in silent submission, a submission which must have pleased the Lord greatly. On the cross he was tried as gold in the furnace, but no dross was found in him. On the accursed tree the stress of

the world's sin lay on him, and yet he did not wish to depart from the enterprise which he had undertaken till he had been obedient to the Father and accomplished all his will, even to the endurance of death itself. He did always the things which pleased God.

Having already made the text encompass parts of our Lord's work which were subsequent to the time when he uttered it, I shall push on yet further, for I have fact beneath my feet, and I would remind you that still our Lord does always those things that please God. It pleased God that he should ascend and sit at his right hand; it pleased God that there he should be our forerunner, preparing our heavenly mansions for us. He is accepted, we know, for we also are "accepted in the Beloved." It is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom, and therefore it is his pleasure that our divine representative should take the kingdom on our behalf. The intercession of Jesus, also, is always sweet with God. The Father hears him always, and hears us also when we plead his name. And when he shall "so come in like manner as he went up to heaven," when he shall come to "take to himself his great power and reign," and when on the clouds of heaven he shall appear to judge the quick and dead, he will still do always the things which please God.

Ay, let me say it joyfully, the saving works of Jesus are lovely in the Father's eyes. Whenever our Lord Jesus says to a sinner, "I absolve thee," it pleases God; whenever the Saviour calls a wanderer to himself and draws him to holiness by the attractions of his love it pleases God. What else is meant by the passage, "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied"? It is the pleasure of God that sinners should find a complete Saviour in Jesus. The Father hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that he should turn unto him and live, but there is joy in the heart of God himself over sinners that repent. Sheep brought back to the fold are rejoiced over by him of whom we sing, "We are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand." Prodigals leaving their riotous living are pressed to the Father's bosom and cause pleasure to the soul of the benign Deity. Oh, returning sinners, ye have not to ask Christ to appease the Father, for the Father himself loveth you, and your salvation gives him joy.

As for the benefit which Christ bestows upon saints, the matchless boons which he has received as "gifts for men," and scatters among his people, these all please the Father. It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, and it pleases him when of his fulness all we receive grace for grace. Oh, brethren, if ye be rich in grace ye are not rich with gifts which the Father grudges, and if ye shall ask for more it is your Father's good pleasure that you should have them. Receive them freely, for he freely gives; delight yourself in them, for the Father delights to see you partaking of his Son's abundance. Be of good courage, sinners, when ye come with empty hands, and be of good courage, ye impoverished saints, when ye come with hungry mouths, for Jesus Christ in giving freely will only do what pleases the Father.

I feel greatly comforted by this text when I think that whatever

Christ has done and is doing pleases God. The gospel, which is the sum and substance of the doings of Jesus, is acceptable with God always, it is a sweet savour unto God in every place. It delights the Father that Jesus Christ should be preached. I have often thought when I have been extolling my Lord and Master—well, if not a soul in the place yields itself to Jesus, nevertheless thanks be unto God who always causes us to triumph in every place, for we are unto God a sweet savour, as well in them that perish as in them that are saved. If Christ be preached, a sweet oblation is presented, sweeter than the incense of Araby, and it delights the Most High more than costly frankincense. As of old he smelled a "sweet savour of rest" when Noah brought the victim and laid it on the altar, so when Christ is lifted up God taketh pleasure in him, and delighteth when men glorify his Son.

Thus I have spoken very feebly about our Lord Jesus as the Mediator. No man nor angel can fitly set him forth, he is too fair, too perfect for description. Earth cannot show his rival nor heaven his equal, he is good, and only good; all glory to his name. He has glorified the Father, and he can say to the full, "I do always those things that please him."

II. Now, brethren, we have stern work to do. We have not merely to look, but we have to be transformed as we look; we are now to behold our Lord as THE MODEL, and to copy his example. Truly we shall need the Spirit of God to hold our hand, or we shall never write according to such a copy as he has set us. It is the business of every Christian to be able to say, "I do always those things which please him." Come, ye believers, and lovingly muse upon our Lord Jesus as our model.

Here at the outset let me remind you that this will imply that we ourselves are rendered pleasing to God. Remember that as long as a man himself is obnoxious to God everything he does is obnoxious also. From a sinner comes nothing but sin; an evil tree brings forth evil fruit, a foul fountain pours forth polluted waters. It is vain, therefore, to think, any one of you, that you can do anything that is pleasing to God till first of all you yourselves are reconciled unto him. The way of reconciliation is only by Jesus Christ. When your persons are pleasing your works will be pleasing; but until you are personally acceptable to God through Jesus Christ everything that you do is displeasing, and even those things which you think to be virtues are only, as Augustine called them, "splendid sins," mere glittering dross, lacking the essential purity and preciousness of the pure gold of love. Paul says, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God;" and again he says, "Without faith it is impossible to please him;"—impossible, whatever is thought, attempted, or done by you. Even acts of religion are only pretentious forms of sin until the nature is renewed, the heart changed, and the man himself washed in the blood of Christ and covered with his righteousness. Therefore, I shall have to speak entirely and only to those who have been by the redemption and righteousness of Christ made pleasing to God, and I hope that they, having obtained the major blessing of personal acceptance, will press forward for the further blessing of

sanctification, that they may do always the things which please their gracious God.

In pleasing God there is implied an avoiding of all things which would displease him. We cannot say we "do always the things which please him" unless we earnestly renounce the follies which vex his Holy Spirit. Now, you know what the works of the flesh are, and those, as defiled garments, are to be put off, that we may go in unto the wedding in the new garment; like leaven they are to be swept out of the house, that we may keep the paschal feast. We must put off and lay aside all pride, whether it be the pride of talent, the pride of self-righteousness, the pride of wealth, the pride of dress, the pride of rank, or the pride of spiritual attainments, for even a haughty word is detestable with God. Among the things which the Lord hateth we find prominently mentioned a proud look. If a proud look be his abomination, what must pride itself be? It is written, "The Lord resisteth the proud," and this implies that their views and designs are contrary to his own, and he sets himself to oppose them. He carries on continual war with Pharaohs and Sennacheribs. The moment he sees a man great in his own esteem he resolves to bring him down, as he did the boastful monarch of Babylon. He lifteth up those that be bowed down, but he casteth down the mighty from their seats. If we are proud we cannot do that which pleases God; in fact, we cannot please him at all.

Sloth, also is another vice which the Lord abhors. He calls the idle servant in the parable, "Thou wicked and slothful servant." "He that knoweth his master's will and doeth it not, the same shall be beaten with many stripes." "He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." God is not pleased with those who are idle, wasters of their talents and their time, even though they may plead that they are gentlefolks and have no need to labour. An idle nobleman is as much to be blamed as an idle ploughman. Christians, if ye do always the things that please God ye must be diligent servants; he takes no delight in sluggards and those who are lovers of ease.

God is not pleased with unwatchfulness, careless walking, indifference to his commands, or neglect of cleansing the heart. Those virgins who were not thoughtful forgot to take oil in their vessels with their lamps, and, in consequence, their lamps went out, and they could not enter the marriage feast with the bride. Beloved, ye must walk carefully, earnestly, zealously with God, or ye cannot please him. He is a jealous God, and we must jealously watch even our thoughts, or we shall soon offend him.

Neither is he pleased with anger, which is not only, as far as we are concerned, a temporary insanity; but as God judges it, it is murder. He that is of a quick and hasty spirit, he that beareth ill will against another, he that seeketh revenge, is not acceptable with God. To a God of love malice is abominable. He would have us do good as he does, and spread happiness all around as he does. Cross, crabbed, morose natures do not please the Lord. Unkind husbands, fractious wives, rebellious children, and domineering parents are far from pleasing him. God cannot smile upon oppression, craftiness, greed, or the grinding of the poor. Neither is "covetousness, which is idolatry," pleasing with God. He that is covetous, angers the great Giver of all

good, whose liberal soul cannot endure churls and misers. The like is true of all worldliness; the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, these are things which God condemns; in them he hath no pleasure whatsoever. O ye believers, I pray ye purge yourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and as for the deeds of darkness, have no fellowship with them, but rather reprove them. Come ye out from among them, be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing, and then will you please your heavenly Father.

Equally is God displeased with unbelief. Doubts of his power, his love, his faithfulness, trembling lest he should not keep his promise, lest, after all, his word should fail—this is not pleasing in his sight. Neither is it pleasing to him that good men should be cumbered with much serving, and should complain of the labour of his service; he would not have his servants think him a hard master. Brethren, he would have us serve him with joyfulness; free from care, because we cast our care upon him; free from fear, because we wholly confide in him. Above all he would have us free from murmuring—“Neither murmur ye as they also murmured, who were destroyed of the destroyer.” His dear Son was free from everything of this kind; and as he was, so are ye also in this world, therefore closely copy ye him, and lay aside all these evil things by the help of his Holy Spirit.

Here is the place to say that it should be our intent and earnest design to please the Lord. We shall not do this by accident; we must give our whole souls to the work and labour mightily. No arrow reaches this target if the bow be drawn at a venture: the heart must aim with earnest intent and vehement desire. May the Holy Spirit work in us to will after this fashion, and then in due time we shall be sure that he will work in us also to do of his good pleasure.

We will continue the same strain but touch another key. Remark attentively that the text does not deal with negatives, though it implies them. Christ did not say, “I do not the things which displease him,” but he said, “I *do* always those things that please him.” The sentence is positive and practical, relating to actual deeds and not to negatives. We must copy our Master in all the practical virtues, and what a model he is! What a pattern he has set before us! Brethren, what was the most conspicuous thing in the life of Christ? I cannot tell you, everything is so conspicuously admirable, there is a harmony, a blending of every virtue in the life of Christ, that you can scarcely put your finger upon one thing and say, “This was superior to the rest.” But if there be some excellent things more marked than others, one of them is prayerfulness! How continually do we read “as he was praying,” or “as he was praying in a certain place,” or “every man went to his own home, and Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.” We are told that he spent whole nights in prayer upon the mountain side, he was always in communion with God. For God to speak out of heaven to him was not a strange thing, for Christ was always speaking up into heaven to his God. Be ye such. It cannot please the great Father for his child not to speak to him by the hour together, and to be indifferent to him, to give him no word either of request or of thanksgiving. Alas, I fear some professors seldom speak with their heavenly Father

in spirit and in truth. If we fail here we certainly fail in one of the things which please him.

Next in Christ's life one of the more prominent qualities was his love, his love to God. We ought to love God with all our hearts, and spend and be spent for his glory. It must be our meat and drink to do the will of him that sent us, and to finish his work if we are to do the things which please him. But our great Exemplar also showed the warmest love to men. How he pitied the fallen! With what tenderness he spoke to sinners! How gently did he warn! How sweetly did he woo! Brethren, we must be gentle too. That which is hard and domineering savours more of the princes of the Gentiles than of the lowly Lamb—we must put it away. Like our Master and Lord, we must wash the disciples' feet, and bear one another's burdens. Gently, kindly, tenderly we must labour for the good of all, and not consider ourselves. This is to do the things which please God.

If we would follow Christ, we must practise self-denial, for he "pleased not himself." It should be said of us as of him, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." Did you ever in anything find Christ making provision for himself? Can you discern a speck of selfishness in his nature? There is a crown before him, but he will not have it, he longs to see us crowned. What cares he about being made a king? his joy is that the Lord reigneth. He felt it better to obey his Father than to sit on a throne. Oh that we might catch his spirit!

The life of Christ is peculiar, too, from its separateness from sinners. He was with sinners, he ate and drank with them, he went to their marriage feasts, and sat at their banquets, but he was as distinct from them as the sun from the ash-heap upon which it shines. He was without the camp in spirit, even when he was in it in person; he bore reproach all his life long, and last of all bore it up to Calvary. We, too, must be different from other men, not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds. It is folly to be singular, except when to be singular is to be right, and then we must be bravely singular for Christ's sake, and in the lonely path of holy non-conformity we shall find Jesus more near than ever we knew him to be in the whole course of our lives.

I cannot enlarge here. The picture is so beautiful, that merely to dwell upon a touch or two of the pencil is to give you no idea of the matchless perfection of the work. Be ye as he was: copy him as disciples should copy their Master!

Furthermore, my dear brethren, if you want to know what things please God, let me refer you to one or two passages of Scripture. David says in the sixty-ninth Psalm, the thirtieth verse, "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs." The apostle says in Hebrews xiii. 16, "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Let us, then, constantly praise God. Let us have hymns in store for moments when we can sing, and thoughts in store for moments when the tongue must be silent, but when the heart may yet sing aloud unto the Most High. Bless ye the Lord, for whoso offereth praise glorifieth him. A thankful spirit is always pleasing to God; there-

fore cultivate it ; and shake off, as you would shake off a viper from your hand, the spirit of murmuring against the Most High. Yonder thankful, humble poor woman may please God better than the most talented minister who is evermore complaining of the dispensations of God. John tells us in his first epistle, third chapter and twenty-second verse, that we are to "do those things that are pleasing in his sight," and he adds, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another." Faith, therefore, is one of the pleasing graces. We read of Enoch that "before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him." Love to the brethren is also another of the graces which please God. He would have us love his people, care for the poor, relieve those that are sick, and cheer those who are cast down. Brethren, if ye would please the Lord, put aside all petty jealousies, and labour to prevent disunion ; for brotherly love is one of the most pleasing sights which the Father of mercies sees ; it is as the dew of Hermon, as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Read furthermore in Colossians the first chapter, from the tenth verse, a long list of excellences. "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God ; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness ; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." So you see, you sufferers, your resignation to the divine will, your patience under a smarting rod, these are all well pleasing to God ; and these and all the other graces of the Spirit are the things which through Jesus Christ are pleasing in his sight.

Now, note particularly this, that these things must be actually done. "I do," says Christ, "those things which are pleasing." It will not suffice to talk about them, nor to pray about them even, they must be done. Do not merely feel charmed with a virtue, and fascinated with a duty, but go and actually carry it out ; let not the purpose be strangled in its birth, but let it be born into actual being.

There is a word in the text which is a hard one to put in practice—"always,"—"I do *always* those things that please him." It will not suffice to say, "I do the things that please God when I go out to worship." I hope you do, but the Christian must aim to say, "I do *always*." At home, husband, there must be such a discharge of your relationship, that as a husband and as a father you please God. My good sister, it must be as a wife, and a mother, and a mistress that you please God. In all those relationships at all times you must act as in his sight. True religion is perhaps better tested at the fireside than anywhere else. What a man is at home that he is, and though he be a saint abroad, if he be a devil at home, you may depend upon it that the last is his real character. At the same time, we must not think that our religion ends at home ; I do not suppose we shall, but if we do we are mistaken ; we must do *always* the things that please the Lord. There must not be at any moment about our Christian career anything we should not like God to see, for

he does see ; neither must we be where we would not like Christ to find us ; neither must we even think as we would not have Jesus know that we think. A high standard this, but our Lord Jesus Christ sets it before us, and it is not for us to alter the pattern which he has given :—" I do always," he says, " the things that please him." Are there not many things, dear friends, which you have done in former times, which you will not do again now you have been reminded of your failings ? There are many things which certain Christian people leave undone, which they will attend to at once if they realise the full meaning of this text—" I do *always* the things that please him." *Always!* I have known some persons take a holiday from Christ's service sometimes ; they say, " Once a-year surely one may indulge." What would you do if you might be indulged ? because whatever you would do if you had your own way, is the best test of your heart. If holiness is slavery, then depend upon it, you are the slave of sin. When I have heard of Christian men attending doubtful amusements as an occasional treat, I have seen at once which way their hearts went ; they evidently loved the pleasures of sense better than spiritual joys. Where either a man's pleasure or treasure is, there his heart is, and whatever gives you the most pleasure is really your god. To be flattered is the greatest delight of many,—their god is themselves. " To make money is my greatest delight," says one. Then the golden calf is your god. Whatever is your greatest joy and treasure, that is your heaven and your god ; and if you do not find the greatest pleasure in the things of God, then you do not know what the new life means, neither will you ever know the pleasures which are at God's right hand.

Dear brethren and sisters, I beseech all of you to notice that by doing always the things which please God, the Holy Spirit enabling us so to do, we shall enjoy and retain the presence of the Father. " He that sent me is with me, he hath not left me alone, for I do always those things which please him." Do you complain that you do not enjoy fellowship with God ? Do you tell me that the joys of religion have not been yours for many a day ? Do you come with long faces and complain that you find the way to heaven very rough ? God has a controversy with your souls ; there is some hidden evil within, or some evil habit which does not please him. Is not that hint of mine enough for you without my pressing it ? Does not your tender conscience say, " I will examine myself, I will ask God to search me, and I will solemnly promise to him

'The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Shall now be dashed from off its throne
That I may come to thee.'"

Let no pleasurable sin become an image of jealousy to provoke the Lord our God. As ye love the Lord, and I know you do, as you would not grieve your crucified Master, ask him to search you and see if there be any evil way in you, and deliver you from it, that you may always do the things which are pleasing in his sight.

Furthermore, by so doing, we shall not only have communion with God, but we shall be girded with his strength. " He that sent me is with me." What is the reason why some workers for God do not succeed ? They cannot succeed, it is not possible, for they are in an

evil case. Here is a man trying to build a wall with a broken arm ; he makes slow progress, for he can hardly lift a brick into its place. Here is another man trying to run a race while he is lame in his feet, he will be far behind when the winner passes the goal. Here is a man trying to leap whose every muscle is weak, he would be more at home in an infirmary. Personal spiritual health is essential to vigorous, successful, Christian effort, and that health depends upon our living near to God.

If we do that which is pleasing in God's sight the Lord will be with us in our work, but not else. Suppose a minister to have been living through the week a careless, prayerless life ; he may preach his best, but as he is not a vessel fit for the Master's use he may not reckon upon being used by the Lord. If the Sunday-school teacher goes to her class after indulging in light conversation or in an angry temper, there is no wonder that souls are not converted by her teaching. If the city missionary does not find souls blessed in his district, need he wonder, when upon looking within he sees a cold heart, and upon looking without he sees a negligent life ? A mother wonders that her children are not saved, and yet it would be a far greater wonder if they were, when her general conduct and spirit are taken into consideration. A father has been astonished that his boys have not turned out Christians, while every one except himself can see that it would have been a thousand miracles if they had become religious, for their father's religion is of that sour, melancholy, rigid, frigid, unlovely type, that you could not suppose anybody could like it unless they had a partiality for sour grapes and bitter aloes. We must get rid of the things that displease God, if we are to be useful, and when that is done then shall we be able to say, "He that sent me is with me ; the Father hath not left me alone."

Now I close, and closing I ask you—is this too high a model for you ? Would you prefer an example which would let you abide contented in a measure of sin ? I hear many say, "I love Christ," but their love does not make them imitate the Lord. I fear that they do not know him, and if they did they would not love him, but would think him a deal too precise and self-denying. There is such a thing as loving a Christ of our imagining, and not the Christ of the New Testament, whose character is absolute perfection. Do you love the holy Jesus ? If you do, then I am sure you do not think his character too elevated, or his example too pure, nay, you say, "Lord, I love this holy living, I only wish I could in all things copy it. Oh, for more holiness ! Grant it to me !"

Do you think it is impossible to act as Jesus did ? Then I must ask you another question, Do you think the Holy Ghost has not yet come, or do you conceive that the Holy Spirit is deficient in power, so that he can only lead men up to a certain point, and must there necessarily cease working ? Do you not believe that all things are possible with him ? Do you not believe that all things are possible to him that believeth ? I grant you that men do not live as my text requires, and that the most of professors do not even try to do so, but the fault is in themselves, and not in the Holy Spirit. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think. Somebody asked me the other day whether I thought Christians could be quite perfect, and, I

have no doubt, expected a long harangue from me; but I cut him short, for my secret thought was, "Well, you are a fine fellow to be asking such a question, for there is no danger of your coming anywhere near that condition." That question from most men is about as consistent as if a beggar should come to my door for bread, and then should request to see me. I go to the door, and he says, "Sir, I have a very difficult question to put to you: do you think every man in England might make his fortune and be worth a million of money?" What a question for a man in rags to agitate! Surely he might put off that inquiry till he is worth twopence himself, and can pay for his night's lodging. I say to him, "My good fellow, you are not at all in danger of becoming too rich, and have no need to raise questions about millions; get out of your rags and make yourself commonly decent before you puzzle your head over that." It is early days for most professors to be discussing the higher life and entire sanctification, they are like babies taking the measure of giants. I am sick of seeing a set of beggarly professors, whose poverty of grace is manifest to everybody but themselves, shaking their heads at those good brethren who preach up a high standard of grace. They need be under no alarm about growing too devout, too prayerful, or too holy. They may go a long way before they will be mistaken for perfect. I do not believe in a great deal which our modern perfectionists say about themselves, and I should think a deal more of them if they thought less of themselves, but at the same time I labour under no dread as to any of them becoming too good, nor dare I set up a lower object of sanctified aspiration than that which Jesus has set before us in the command, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Have you failed to do as the text says? Then grieve over it. Do you wish to do as Jesus did? Then he will help you, for he worketh with us mightily. Commit yourself unto his teaching, give yourself up to the purifying power of his Spirit, and he will bear you up to heights of grace and glories of character which you have never thought you could reach, but which when you reach them will not puff you up, for you will feel constrained to cry, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give praise!" If we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, we have only done that which it was our duty to have done, and therefore unto grace shall be the praise through the precious blood of Christ, for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xiv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—460, 259, 815.

Our readers are aware that we have a College for the training of young men for the ministry. This depends, under God, upon the spontaneous gifts of God's people. If we say that our funds are low, is not that a sufficient hint to the Lord's stewards who do always those things that please him? Our sole aim is God's glory through the preaching of the gospel, and the brethren sent out have not disappointed us. The work needs £100 every week of the year.—C. H. SPURGEON, Nightingale Lane, Clapham, Surrey.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

MARROW AND FATNESS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 29TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then went King David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord God, knowest thy servant. For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them. Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears."—2 Samuel vii. 18—22.

DAVID was overwhelmed with the mercy of God: Nathan's message was too much for him. He felt emotions in his bosom which he could not express. Like a wise man, he went at once, while under the impulse of gratitude, into the place of nearness to God. It was not every one who might go in and sit before the Lord as he did; but he felt he had a special call to draw near unto the Most High: and there he sat him down in the posture of waiting to receive the fulfilment of what was promised, in the posture of rest, as one who had now all that he could desire, and was pressed down under the weight of blessing. Yet the psalmist's sitting was also a posture of worship, and surely of all passages of Scripture none can be said to contain more true adoration than that which is now before us. The king sat, however, *before the Lord*. The mercy had all come from God, and therefore to God all his praise be offered. His soul waited only upon the Lord, because his expectation was alone from him. He was conscious of being in the sacred presence, and he sat there, feeling that by the covenant blessing he had been brought very near, and his spirit exulted in that nearness. Brethren and sisters in Christ, the mercies which God has shown to us are as great as those which he manifested to his servant David, and if the Spirit of God has opened our eyes to see and understand them we may this morning ardently wish to do precisely what David did. Let us have boldness to enter into the nearest possible fellowship with God—yea, let us go where David could not go, within the veil,
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and there, where Christ has opened up the way through his rent body, let us sit down in a restful, waiting, happy spirit, and give full play to all those divine emotions which ought to be aroused by reflecting upon the lovingkindness of the Lord. I have selected this subject because there are many among us who have lately found the Saviour, and it is well to let them see the happiness which belongs to them, the pleasures and the treasures which are theirs in Christ Jesus, that they may render unto the God of grace the glory which is due unto his name.

David did not understand the words of Nathan to relate merely to his dynasty and to his dominion over the house of Israel. He looked far beyond temporal things, and therefore in the words before us there is a spiritual depth which will not strike the eye of the casual reader. The New Testament must be the expositor of the Old, and Peter in his famous sermon gives us the key to this passage. Turn to Acts ii. 29, and you will find that Peter accounts for a memorable utterance of David in the Psalms by declaring that he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.

The joy which filled David's bosom was a spiritual one, because he knew that Jesus would come of his race, and that an everlasting kingdom would be set up in his person, and in him should the Gentiles trust. Now, then, we also, being blest with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, are bound to feel as David felt, and therefore we shall pass in review David's expressions, with the desire that we may drop into the same mood. May God the Holy Ghost, who alone can enable us to do so, bless our meditation at this time.

I. First I shall want you to notice THE HUMILITY apparent in David's words. "Then went King David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, *Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?*"

First, he owned the *lowliness of his origin*—"What is my house?" He came not of royal blood. Nathan spake the truth when he said in the Lord's name, "I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep." He was but a humble shepherd lad when first he was anointed, and after that anointing he continued in that humble office. From this he rose to become the leader of a motley band of free-lances exiled from their country; yet the Lord was pleased to call him from his low estate to make him king over the chosen people. Beloved, what is our origin? What is there about our descent that could claim for us the high privilege of being sons of God? Trace our origin to its most ancient source, and behold sin is there, staining the escutcheon of our house. All down the line there is a taint of high treason against the divine majesty; we come of a race of rebels, and our own personal birth was marred with sin. Heraldry lends no pomp to us, and the genealogist for the most of us reveals no hereditary glories, and if he did they would be mere fancies and fictions, not worthy to be mentioned before the presence of the Lord. "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my father's house?"

David laid the most stress upon *his own personal unworthiness*. He said, "Who am I? What was there in me that thou shouldest

make me a king, and a progenitor of the Christ?" And will not each believer here say the same? Who am I? What is there in me? God might have chosen the great and the mighty of the world, but he has passed them by; he might have chosen the learned and famous, but not many of them are called: he hath chosen the poor of this world and things that are despised; yea, the base things hath God chosen, and the things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are, that no flesh might glory in his presence. Look* at yourself from head to foot; examine every cranny of your heart, and every single feature of your character, and can you see anything there that might command Jehovah's esteem, any qualifications for being bought with redeeming blood, any reasons why you should be made sons of God, and heirs of glory? The Lord had reasons for choosing you, for he acts according to the counsel of his will, but those reasons are not in you; they lie in his own bosom, and you must exclaim, "Who am I that thou hast brought me hitherto?" I have no doubt that David looked upon his own deservings—what if I rather correct myself and say his own undeservings?—and marvelled that the Lord had chosen him and rejected Saul. He was a man after God's own heart, but his conduct was that of a bold, rough soldier, and he could not look upon it without observing its imperfections. He prayed in the twenty-fifth Psalm, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord." These sins are not recorded in the chronicles of his life, but they were written in his own penitent memory; and being humbled concerning them he cried, "Who am I?" There must have been many an action in his exile and wanderings which he did not rejoice to remember: for instance, his mimicry of madness before the king of Gath, his great anger against Nabal, and his affinity with the Philistines; and beside such prominent errors as these, he could see many failings and transgressions all along, and these both made the grace of God the more illustrious, and led him to cry from his very heart, "Who am I, O Lord God?"

Now, brethren and sisters, look back upon your own lives before conversion. What were they? Let them be blotted out with tears. Consider your lives since conversion, and confess that whenever you have been left to yourselves, and the grace of God has withdrawn for a while, you have always stumbled into some form or other of deplorable folly. Who am I? What have I done? What have I been? How is it that I am made thy child, purchased with the blood of Jesus, and made an heir of heaven? We may sum it all up in that exclamation, "Why me, Lord?"

"Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter where there's room,
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"

There is something very interesting in the expression, "Who am I, O Lord God?" His sense of *his own nothingness* is strikingly set forth by putting the "I" side by side with "Lord God." "I David, Jesse's son, the shepherd's boy, who am I, O thou infinite, all-commanding Jehovah, Creator, Preserver, Lord over all? How can I

stand in thy presence? I shrink to nothing there. Did I not come of thee? Do I not owe all to thee? Art thou not the very breath of my nostrils? and I am a nothing, a very dream, a thing of nought, and yet thou dost look upon me; and thou showerest down thy mercies upon me; with a flood of blessedness dost thou carry me away. Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house?" Thus you see David's humility under a sense of mercy.

And let us here remark that nothing humbles a man like the mercy of God. Unkind, ungenerous remarks do not humble the soul, they rather gender pride. Under the criticisms of unkindness a man who is a man finds all that is strong within him coming to the front, and, as in Job's case, self-assertion straightway leads the van. Reproach and rebuke tend rather to make men proud than humble, love is the melting power. Nothing weighs a man down like a load of blessing. When you see God blotting out your sin, accounting you righteous in his sight, for Jesus' sake, and saying to you, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee," where is boasting then? It is excluded. Love shows boasting to the door, and bars its return. Peter was ready enough to speak of what he had done, but in the presence of his loving Lord, when he saw his ship sinking through the plenteous draught of fishes, he knelt down and cried in deep humiliation, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

"The more thy glories strike mine eyes
The humbler I shall lie."

A sight of the glory and mercy of God is sure to produce in us a sense of shame for our ill-desert, combined with wonder that God should have so much as a single kind look for us. Sit ye down, then, children of God, and review his mercy and be humbled. Do not deny yourselves the joyful review because of a jealous fear of being exalted by it. Never endorse the great lie of the self-righteous, that full assurance of faith leads men to presumption. It does no such thing; it humbles a man, makes him feel his own unworthiness, and so leads him to walk more carefully and prayerfully before his God. It is in this point that faith makes us strong, for while it exalts our joys, it slays our pride and makes us shrink to nothing before the great ALL IN ALL.

II. Now observe, secondly, David's WONDERING GRATITUDE. He wondered, first, at *what God had done for him*: "What is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?—to a house of cedar, and to be able to talk about building a house for thee; to be thy chosen king, and to have my seed established on my throne, and to become the ancestor of the Christ!" Come, brethren and sisters, you do not need me to preach to you here. I should like to sit down and leave you to muse upon what the Lord has done in bringing you hitherto—up from the pit of destruction, up from the miry clay of your depravity, out of the horrible prison-house of your dread of divine wrath, away from the Egypt of darkness and bondage into light and liberty. What an almighty work it was that brought you from darkness into light, from death into life. Bless the Lord for this. Praise him for your calling when effectually he drew you, and you ran unto him weeping

and singing. Praise him for your pardon when he washed you in the blood and you were clean, and knew you were. Wonder of wonders this! Praise him for your justification, when he took the robe the Saviour wrought, and decked you with it, as never was bride arrayed by the most loving bridegroom. Praise him for your regeneration, when you were born into a new world; praise him for being set apart for holy uses, admitted to new company, filled with holy joys, instructed in heavenly truths, and dedicated to sacred duties. Praise him for sanctification, which has made you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Praise him for the preservation from sin which you have hitherto received, and the education for eternity which has so happily commenced; for the provision so bounteous with which he has furnished a table in the wilderness, both temporally and spiritually, and for the protection with which he has warded off the arrow that flieth by day, and the pestilence that walketh in darkness. O Lord, I bless thee that thou hast brought me hitherto. Sometimes when I take a view of what God has done for me I feel like Christian when he went through the Valley of the Shadow of Death by night. Remember how Bunyan pictures the scene;—a narrow pathway with a pit on this side and a deep morass on that; on all sides hobgoblins, dragons, and spirits of the deep, seeking to destroy him; his sword useless, and therefore put by in its sheath; no weapon in his hand but that of All-prayer, which he found alone to be equal to the emergency; and when he had gone through it, and the sun rose on him, and he looked back, he could not believe his eyes that he passed through it. And truly at this moment looking back on life with its innumerable temptations, and remembering the tendency to yield there is within every one of us, we can each one sing as Christian did—

“ Oh, world of wonders (I can say no less),
That I should be preserved in that distress
That I have met with here! Oh, blessed be
That hand which from it hath delivered me!
Dangers in darkness, devils, hell, and sin,
Did compass me, while I this vale was in:
Yea, snares, and pits, and traps, and nets did lie
My path about, that worthless, silly I
Might have been caught, entangled, and cast down,
But, since I live, let Jesus wear the crown.”

David did not end his wonder there, but went on to another and greater theme, viz. *the blessings which the Lord had promised him*. He praised the Lord for what he had laid up as well as for what he had laid out. He said, and mark the words, “And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God, but thou hast spoken also of thy servant’s house for a great while to come.” What a wonderful expression! “And this was yet a small thing in thy sight.” It sometimes appears as if every mercy the Lord brings us is meant to eclipse those which have gone before. For instance, he gives a sinner pardon, and the soul is for a time perfectly content with cleansing, and expects nothing more, but soon it learns that there is such a thing as justification; and when it comes to be just with God, complete in Christ, and

accepted in the Beloved, then it rejoices anew as if pardon were but a small thing compared with justification. And lo, ere our eyes have fully drunk in the beauty of justification, we hear the word which saith, "A new heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you: I will write my law in your hearts, and ye shall not depart from me," and our hearts are carried away with the splendours of sanctification. Scarcely, however, have we been fully made aware of the extent of this blessing before another portion of the royal regalia is uncovered, and we hear it said, "They shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty," and now we understand that we are adopted, and are children of God. Before we fully understand this great privilege we begin to hear the song whose swell is like that of many waters, "He hath made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign for ever and ever," and we see the royal prerogative, the priestly dignity which God has put upon us; yea, and long before even these mercies are perfectly understood we are called away to see the heavenly joys, compared with which all else will seem to be yet a small thing.

I beg you, my brethren, to remember to-day that your God has spoken of you for a great while to come. He has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Is not that for a great while to come? He has bidden thee say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Is not that for a great while to come? He has promised to give you all you ever shall require. "No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly." Note well that text ever to be remembered, "Because I live ye shall live also," and that petition of our Lord, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." These, and a hundred more gracious words, all concern a great while to come. Oh, my brethren, you have not obtained transient blessings, boons which will be gone to-morrow, gifts which will decay as the year grows old and the autumn leaves flutter to the ground. You have not obtained a mercy which will leave you when you tremble in decrepitude, nay rather, when old and grey-headed your God will not forsake you; you shall still bring forth fruit in old age, to show that the Lord is upright. "When thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee; the floods shall not overflow thee;" therefore may you boldly say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." When ye die ye shall rise again. In your flesh you shall see God, and shall rejoice before him. Yea, for ever shall you be satisfied when you wake up in his likeness; you shall go into everlasting joy, and so shall be for ever with the Lord. He has spoken to you for a great while to come. Sit down and wonder; wonder and adore for evermore.

"Firm as the lasting hills,
This covenant shall endure,
Whose potent *shalls* and *wills*
Make every blessing sure:
When ruin shakes all nature's frame,
Its jots and tittles stand the same."

David had yet another theme for wonder, which was this—the manner of the giving of all this. There is often as much in the manner of a gift as in a gift itself. I have known some who could refuse a favour, and give greater pleasure by their kindly-worded denial than others by their rude consent. Now, here is a mercy of which the way of giving it is, if possible, more astounding than the mercy itself, though that is amazing beyond measure; for David says, “And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?” The word in the Hebrew is the “law.” It is never translated, except in this case, by the word “manner;” and we may keep to the word “law” if we like:—“Is this the law of man, O Lord God?” We will render the passage first according to the authorized version: “Is this the manner of man?” Does man act like this? Does man pitch his love upon the unworthy? Does man exalt the lowest to the highest place? Does man forgive transgressions, and continue to do so? Does man bear provocation, and return love for offences? Is man so faithful? Is man so bounteous? Oh, man can never be divine, and therefore man can never come up to the infinity of thy grace, O Lord God. This is not after the manner of man, neither is it after the law of man, for the law of Adam is, “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Punishment follows quick on the heels of sin. Free grace is not the law of the first man, it is the law of another man, the Second Adam, and so some render the passage, “This is the law of the Man,” the Man Christ Jesus, the true Adam. We will not contend for that rendering, but it contains a truth which we will now utter in our own words. It is not the law of man, it is the law of grace, the law of infinite mercy, the law of infallible faithfulness, the law of immutable love. Beloved, if it had not been revealed to you ye could never have imagined or dreamed of such a fulness of grace as the Lord has actually made to pass before you. It is more marvellous than romance. It may well make your heart exult, for it is astonishing beyond all measure. Jonathan Edwards, when defending the great Calvinistic theory, made use of language somewhat to this effect: “You tell me that the doctrines of grace are a dream; then, if it be so, you ought to join with me in perpetual regret that it is so.” I venture to say, let the earth be hung in sackcloth if there be no covenant of grace, no way of salvation by redemption; for it is the most charming of conceptions, and brings to mankind the most extraordinary of blessings. If this be dreaming, let me dream on, my God, for ever. Eternal love welling up in infinite blessing to the chosen race, and pouring forth for ever inexhaustible rivers of mercy, is far above all that man could of himself have imagined. Poetry has never soared within a myriad leagues of such an imagination. I am more than content with the covenant love of my God. I ask for nothing else. This fills my soul and satisfies my spirit, and I would sit down before thee, my Father, and say, “Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?” Infinite love granting infinite boons! The gospel must be true; it bears its own witness upon its very brow, for who could have made it up? Where is the imagination that could have conceived such majestic mercy as God reveals unto his people?

III. Now, changing the note, and yet continuing in the same strain, we have to speak of David's emotion of LOVE. I almost regret that

I have to speak to you; I wish I could sit still and yet make you feel what I feel. If there could be some electric action by which thought could be communicated without words, it would suit my mood exactly at this moment. David found but a scant outlet for his love. What precious words are these: "*What can David say more?*" It is love struck dumb by receiving an unspeakable gift. The king was exactly in the same case as Paul when he said, "What shall we then say to these things?" To that question no answer was ever given by love. Love sat silent after she had asked it, speechless in adoration; and faith pushed himself forward and cried, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" But Love was silent, dumfounded with the mass of mercy. So David says, "What can David say more?" Certainly no eloquence can match the silence of human love abashed by divine love. Sit ye down, O ye saints, and cry, "What can thy servants say?"

Notice the childlikeness of this love. "What can *David* say more?" Your little child, if she is ill, will not say, "Mother, nurse me," but "Mother, nurse poor little Mary;" and when she feels very sick she will say, "Mary's head aches." Your little John, when he wants you to play with him will say, "Please, father, take little John on your knee," or "Please, father, take John for a walk." It is the way children talk, and this is David's child-talk to God. "What shall David say more?" He might have said, "What shall I say more?" but love taught him a simple and sweet speech, which he delighted to use.

Observe, it is a love which longs for communion, and enjoys it. He says, "What can David say more *unto thee?*" He can talk to other people, but he does not quite know how to speak to God, and then he adds, "For thou, Lord God, knowest thy servant," which is a parallel passage to that of Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee," as if he could not speak his heart, but his Master could read it, and he besought the Lord to act as his interpreter. Such thoughts as those which were in David's mind break the backs of words, and stagger speech. Tongues are an after-thought, hearts come first; and oftentimes hearts wish they could fly away from tongues. Language is but a feeble wing, we want to ride the lightning.

"Teach me some melodious sonnet
Sung by flaming tongues above,"

has often been our cry. We are right enough in thinking that we can never express ourselves till we get to heaven. How does John Bertridge put it in that singular hymn? I do not know if I can recall it on the spur of the moment. Yes, here it is—

"Then my tongue would fain express
All his love and loveliness;
But I liap and falter forth
Broken words not half his worth.

"Vex'd I try and try again,
Still my efforts all are vain:
Living tongues are dumb at best,
We must die to speak of Christ."

Death must unloose these stammering tongues, or they will never be able to speak all that we feel when divine love casts us into devout

raptures. Strip us of this cumber, and we will vie with seraphs in their burning hymns, and even the heavenly harps shall learn from us how to magnify the Lord. Till then we must be content to cry with David, What can we say more? Thou, Lord, knowest thy servants.

But do you see it is obedient love as well? It is not mere sentiment, there is a practicalness about it, for he says, "Lord, thou knowest *thy servant*," he subscribes himself as henceforth bound to God's service. With delight he puts on his Master's livery, and sits like a servitor in the hall of the King of kings, waiting to hear what shall be spoken to him. As the eyes of the handmaidens are to their mistress, so his eye is up to his God. Hence it is that David was wont in after times to sing, "O Lord, I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds." He had caught the spirit of the Christian proverb, "To serve God is to reign." He loved to do homage at the feet of his liege-lord, and yield himself and all that he had as a reasonable service to him who had crowned him with lovingkindness and tender mercies. Warm love always urges the soul to service. None are so ready to wear the yoke of Christ as those who have leaned on his bosom. The nearer we come to our Father's heart the more submissive we are to his commands. Free grace is the best atmosphere in which to grow strong in obedience. The more often we consider what we owe to eternal love the more ready we shall be to pay our vows unto the Lord.

How he dwells upon those words, "Thou, Lord God." What pleasure he finds in the very name of his Benefactor and Master. All through Scripture we ought to notice the titles by which God is called in each distinct place. We are so poverty-stricken in thought that we generally use but one name for God; not so the rich soul of David: throughout the Psalms you will find him appropriately ringing the changes upon Adonai, El, Elohim, Jehovah, and all the varied combinations of names which loving hearts were wont to give to the glorious Lord of Hosts; and here he says, "Thou, Lord God." He delights in God, and finds music in his name; he is affluent in ascriptions and titles, because his soul is rich in affection. His love was reverent love, adoring love, meditative love, intelligent love, whole-hearted love. It expresses itself by reverence when it fails to compass infinite mercy by descriptions. I want every believer here to be sweetly stirred with this love this morning; I would have you go home and spend an hour this afternoon in contemplating the ever-blessed God, who has done so much for you that you may well say, "What can David say more unto thee?"

My time is flying, but I must have space for another point. David's language is so rich that truly as I take up these words one by one I feel as if I could say with the psalmist, "My soul shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness." Have we not marrow and fatness here?

IV. David's heart was full of PRAISE, and the praise was first for the *freeness of the grace* which brought him such blessedness. "For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart hast thou done all these great things." Whenever the believer asks why God gave him grace in Christ Jesus he can only resort to one answer,—the Lord's own heart has devised and ordained our salvation. Why

did the Lord love you, my brother? Because he would love you, is the only possible reply. In the book of Deuteronomy, seventh chapter and seventh and eighth verses, we have this self-contained love set forth. The Lord did not love the people because they were numerous, but because he loved them. His love was its own reason. He loved us because he would love us, "according to his own heart." Now, this is one of the things which always must astound us and make us love God, that everything comes from him spontaneously, without anything in us that could produce it or call it forth. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," rolls like thunder over the rebel's head, but to a child of God it is full of music; so that voice of the Lord is full of majesty to him. Oh, wonder of wonders, that he who passed the fallen angels by nevertheless stooped to save unworthy men, for so it seemed good in his sight.

David praised also the *faithfulness* of God. He says, "For thy word's sake." Is not that the ground upon which all mercy is received by the child of God? God has promised it and will keep his word. He never did run back from his covenant yet.

"As well might he his being quit
As break his promise or forget."

Jehovah must be true. Oh, what a faithful God has he been to many of us! We can recount the scores and hundreds of times when, if the promise had failed, the disaster would have been irretrievable: but it never has failed. Not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised. Ye men of seventy, ye can say that: we who are but lads in the army are nevertheless bold to avow the same. He has helped in every need, and never yet has he been backward in coming to our rescue or supplying our necessities. Glory be to his name. Let us sit down and adore his faithfulness.

Here we may also see David discerning the connection between divine mercy and the Lord Jesus Christ. What if I read it so—"For THY WORD's sake"—for the sake of the Eternal Logos, the Word that was God, and was with God—for his sake all these mercies have come to us. It is very sweet to see the mark of the pierced hand on every covenant blessing, to receive every boon from the hand that was nailed to the tree for us, and to feel

"There's ne'er a gift his hand bestows,
But cost his heart a groan."

This will lead us to praise God for the freeness of the mercy, for the faithfulness of the mercy, and for the mediatorial grace by which every mercy comes to us.

Then the king's heart was taken up with *the greatness of the covenant blessings*. "According to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things." They were all great. There was not a little mercy among them. All the mercies which we great sinners receive from our great God are inconceivably great, and therefore demand from us the greatest thankfulness. Dwell on the great deliverances, the

great promises, the great comforts, the great expectations of the children of God, till your souls are enlarged with gratitude.

Once more David praised God for *his condescending familiarity*. "According to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, *to make thy servant know them.*" They were revealed to David by a prophet, just as Jesus communed with his disciples, and said, "I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass ye may believe." And yet again, "If it were not so I would have told you." God's mercies are instructions to us. We never know them till God brings them to us and makes us know them, they are their own interpreters; like letters written in cypher they have the clue within themselves. As the prophecies are never understood till they are fulfilled, so the mercies of God are never understood till they are received. Experience teaches. Experience is the master doctor in the University of Christ. When ye know him by testing and handling him, then is Jesus sweet; when you know his power by testing it in weakness, then you understand its exceeding greatness; when you know his faithfulness in deep affliction and great need, then you see it; and when you taste his mercy under a sense of great sin, then you weep with joy as you perceive it. God alone can make his servants know his gifts. Blessed be God, who alone teaches us to profit, and makes his own dear children to sit at his feet. Hath he not said it, "They shall all be taught of the Lord." No school like this; may I for ever be a scholar in it; on the lowest form in that school I would be content to sit and learn eternally. Now give your souls to the sacred lesson. Praise and magnify your God, O ye that love his name!

V. To conclude, not for want of matter, however, but for want of time, David's soul was wound up to HIGH THOUGHTS OF GOD, for our text concludes with these words: "Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears." God is great. He is the greatest because he is the best. The old Romans used to say, *optimus maximus*—the best, the greatest. Thou, God, art good, and therefore thou art great. As we drink in the sense of his goodness we cannot help saying, "Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God"—great positively; then great comparatively—"there is none like thee;" yea, greatest of all, superlatively—"neither is there any God beside thee." I have heard of a preacher upon whom a good man's criticism was that he made God great whenever he preached. God forbid we should ever preach otherwise, and may you, dear hearers, always feel how great God is. I pray you go away with this on your minds—he is too great for me to dare offend him, too greatly good for me to grieve him, too greatly good for me to doubt him. Think of that last. So great, that nothing can be great that I can do for him; so great, that nothing is too great for me to give to him; so great, that when I give myself away, it is a poor offering compared with his deserts; so great, that when all earth and heaven ring with his praises, they still fall short of his glory; so goodly great and greatly good, that I would be all his, and yield myself entirely up to his will, to be like an atom in a current, borne along by his unresisted will. I would be what he would

have me be, do what he would have me do, give what he would have me give, suffer what he would have me suffer; I would be absorbed into him; I would find a heaven in a blessed union with himself, which should prevent for ever any self-assertion, or the setting up of so much as a wish or a thought which would be contrary to his mind. God is great, therefore would I wish others to know him and love him too. All hearts are cold in every place, would God they were melted in this fire: would God they flowed down at his touch in constant worship. Therefore, since he is so great, I will speak great things of him; I will tell it out among the heathen that the Lord reigneth. I would ask for talent, if I may be trusted with it, with which to proclaim him; and if I have small ability, yet with such as I have, grace being given me, I would to the utmost of my ability proclaim the greatness which has already overpowered my spirit. Let him be crowned with majesty: let him be King of kings and Lord of lords, because of all that he has done. Go forth, ye daughters of Jerusalem, and crown your King: throughout the whole of your lives weave chaplets for the Redeemer's brow. Let your lives be psalms, let your garments be vestments, let every meal be a sacrament, let your whole being be transformed into an immortal Hallelujah unto the Lord Most High, for he is greatly to be extolled. O, come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker, and give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.

Blessed God, blessed God, what more can thy servant say? He hath not the voice of David, nor David's harp, nor David's poetic fire, nor David's inspiration, and where even David failed, what more can he say? Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee, and thousands of thy servants here can join in the same declaration. Accept what we speak and what we feel, but cannot utter. Bless thou thy saints for ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Samuel vii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—230, 231, 775.

SHOULD the reader wish to help us spread abroad the honour of our great Master's name, and the sweet savour of his free grace, he will do the preacher great service by helping him in the effort to train other holy tongues to preach the gospel of Jesus. Our College has done much service in this way, for which the Lord be thanked, but we need pecuniary means to carry on the work: God will send us help, we are sure of that, but we think it meet to let his servants know of the work and its needs.—C. H. SPURGEON, Nightingale Lane, Clapham, Surrey.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 5TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."—Acts ii. 47.

We are just coming to the most beautiful season of the year—the spring, when everything around us is shaking off the chill grave-clothes of winter, and putting on the beautiful array of a new life. The church of God was in that condition at Pentecost, her winter was past, and the flowers appeared on the earth. She enjoyed the spring breezes, for the breath of the Holy Spirit refreshed her garden: there was spring music—the time of the singing of birds was come, for her preachers testified faithfully of Jesus, and so many and varied were the sweet notes which welcomed the new season, that many nations of men heard in their own tongue the wonderful works of God. There was, also, the spring blossoming, the fig tree put forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes gave a good smell, for all around multitudes inquired, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" and many also avowed their faith in Jesus. There were the spring showers of repentance, the spring sun-gleams of joy in the Holy Ghost and the spring flowers of newly-given hope and faith. May we behold just such another spring time in all the churches of Jesus Christ throughout the world, and meanwhile let us arouse ourselves suitable to so gladsome a season. Let us rise up and meet the Well-Beloved, and in concert with him let us sow in hope, and look for a speedy upspringing. The Sun of Righteousness is coming forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and the weary night is melting into welcome day; let us hear the Beloved's voice as he cries to us, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

It seems from the text that the additions to the church which were made in the Pentecostal spring-tide did not occur always in one form, sometimes they came in crowds, and at other times by gradual increase. Upon one day there were three thousand added—that is an instance No. 1,167.

of conversion in the mass, when a nation is born at once. In such a work we are bound to believe; I mean not merely in the possibility of it, but in the probability of it, for it stands to reason that what should convince one man in a particular condition of heart would as readily convince three thousand or thirty thousand if they were in the same state. Granted the same soil, the same seed, the same season, and the same wonder-working God, and I cannot imagine any reason why a limit should be set to results. The Holy Spirit is divine, and consequently he knows how to influence all kinds of men, and he can by the instrumentalities now in use reach just as many as he pleases. I recollect well when I first preached in London a remark made by a friend, which very greatly encouraged me at the time, and has proved true in my experience. When he heard that my little country chapel had been filled by the inhabitants of the village in which I had preached, he gave me hope of filling a far larger place in London: "For," said he, "what will draw two hundred will draw two thousand, and what was useful to a few may be made just as useful to a multitude." I saw at once that it was so. When we are dealing with spiritual forces we have not to calculate by pounds and ounces, or by so many horse power. We have not to think of quantity. As an illustration: give me fire, I will not bargain for a furnace, give me but a single candle, and a city or a forest may soon be in a blaze. A spark is quite sufficient to begin with, for fire multiplies itself: so give us the truth, a single voice, and the Holy Spirit with it, and none can say where the sacred conflagration will end. One Jonah sufficed to subdue all Nineveh by one monotonous sentence oft repeated, and despite the weakness of our present instrumentality, if God does but bless the gospel, there is no reason why it should not speedily be felt by the whole of London. The sermon preached by Peter at Pentecost was the arrow of the Lord's deliverance to three thousand, and there is no reason why the Lord should not cause one of ours to be the same. Three thousand cannot be converted if only a hundred are present to hear; but with this vast assembly, and thousands of smaller ones, within gunshot, why should not the slain of the Lord be many? Assuredly the divine Comforter can as readily bless three millions as three individuals.

But it would appear from our text that the additions to the Pentecostal church were not made in a mass at all times. The Spirit of God was still with them, but their increase was more gradual. "The Lord added to the church daily of such as should be saved." You have seen a heavy shower of rain in the spring: in a moment a big drop has fallen upon the pavement, and before you were ready to escape from it a deluge followed, so plenteous that you half suspected a cloud had been rent in twain right over your head: such a sudden and impetuous shower may serve for a figure of the conversion of three thousand souls at once. But at other times rain has fallen gently, and has continued to descend hour by hour, a soft, warm, spring watering, which in its own way and fashion has done its work of blessing quite as surely as the heavier downpour. We must be very thankful if we do not see three thousand converted in one day; if we see three hundred every day for ten days, or see thirty every day for a hundred days; we ought indeed to be

grateful for all success so long as sinners do really come to Jesus. Whether they come in troops, or one by one, we will welcome them ; the woman who lost her money was glad to find one piece, although she would have been even more glad to have found a purseful if they had been lost.

I want you to think about additions to the church as they used to occur among the early Christians. Certain people are always talking about the "early church," and very queer notions they seem to have of the aforesaid early church. Their early church was very different from anything we meet with in the Acts of the Apostles, for it was very particular in its architecture, millinery, and music. This "early church" could not worship at all unless it had a visible altar, with reredos and frontal, at which gentlemen in gorgeous attire of blue and scarlet and fine linen made postures many, and bowings not a few. The "early church," it seems, believed in baptismal regeneration, transubstantiation, priestcraft, and sacramental efficacy. Well, that may be or may not be ; but there was an earlier church which had no such notions, and it is for us to get right away from all such early churches to the earlier church or the earliest church, and there, I warrant you, you shall find no priestcraft, nor nonsense of sacramental efficacy ; but simplicity, and truth, and the power of the Holy Ghost. The early church so much admired by Anglicans was a degenerate vine, a field of wheat and tares, a mass leavened with antichristian error, in a word a baptised heathenism. After its own fashion, it set up again the many deities of the heathen, only calling them saints instead of gods, putting the Virgin into the place of Venus, and setting up Peter or Paul in the niches formerly occupied by Saturn or Mars. Our present "revived early church" is only Paganism with a border of crosses. We are resolved to return to the primitive church of which we read, "then they that gladly received the word were baptized, and they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine." In connection with this church we shall handle our subject, trusting to the Holy Spirit to be with us as with them.

I. First, then, ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH, WHAT ABOUT THEM ?
 "The Lord added to the church daily of such as should be saved."

It seems to have been the custom in the earliest times for persons who had been converted to Christ to join themselves with the church of Jesus Christ. From that fact, I feel persuaded that they did not conceal their convictions. It is a strong temptation with many to say, "I have believed in Jesus, but that is a matter between God and my own soul, there can be no need that I should tell this to others. Can I not go quietly to heaven and be a Nicodemus, or a Joseph of Arimathea ?" To which I reply, Yes, you can go quietly to heaven, and we hope you will do so, but that is a different thing from being cowardly and ashamed of Christ. We shall not object to your being a Nicodemus if you will go with him when he carries spices to the grave of Jesus ; and you may be a Joseph of Arimathea if you will attend him when he goes boldly in unto Pilate and begs the body of Jesus. Neither of these two brethren were cowardly after the cross had been set up before their eyes, neither were they ashamed to identify themselves with Christ crucified. Follow

them, not in the infancy of their love, but in its maturer days. Remember, dear friends, the promise of the gospel runs thus :—"He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him, shall be saved." Do not, I charge you, neglect one half of the command! The gospel commission which we have received is this :—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." That is the message as we find it, we did not insert the clause concerning baptism, neither dare we leave it out, or advise you to neglect it. I give you the very words of the Saviour. Do not, therefore, divide the gospel command in order to throw half of it behind your back, but both believe and avow your belief, and be added to the church.

It is quite clear, too, that believers in those days did not try to go to heaven alone. There has been a great deal said in these latter days about being simply a Christian and not joining any particular church—a piece of cant mostly, and in all cases a mistake. In the name of unity this system is preached up, and yet it is clear to all that it is the reverse of unity, and is calculated to put an end to all visible church fellowship. The good people mentioned in our text joined themselves with the church of God in Jerusalem at once. I dare say that even in those days, had they criticised the church, they would have found faults in her, certainly within a few weeks great faults had to be remedied; but these converts felt that the society at Jerusalem was the church of Christ, and, therefore, they joined themselves thereto. All of you can meet with churches of Jesus Christ if you choose to look for them. If you wait for a perfect church, you must wait until you get to heaven; and even if you could find a perfect assembly on earth, I am sure they would not admit you to their fellowship, for you are not perfect yourself. Find out those people who are nearest to the Scriptures, who hold the truth in doctrine and in ordinance, and are most like the apostolic church, and then cast in your lot with them, and you will be blessed in the deed. Consider the matter, and reflect that if it would be right for you to remain out of church fellowship, it must be right for every other believer to remain in the same condition, and then there would be no visible church on earth at all, and no body of people banded together to maintain the Christian ordinances. Christian fellowship, especially in the breaking of bread, and the maintenance of an evangelistic ministry, would become an impossibility, if no one openly avowed the Saviour's cause. Act then according to your duty, and if you be a Christian, join with Christians; if you love the Master, love the servants; if you love the Captain, unite with the army, and join that regiment of it which you think cleaves closest to the Master's word.

Observe next, that *the persons who were received at Pentecost were added to the church by the Lord*. Does anybody else ever add to the church? Oh, yes, the devil too often thrusts in his servants. Who was it that added Judas, and Ananias and Sapphira, and Simon Magus, and Demas to the church? Who was it that stole forth by night and sowed tares among the wheat? That evil spirit is not dead, he is still busy enough in this department, and continually adds to the church such as are not saved. His are the mixed

multitude which infest the camp of Israel, and are the first to fall a lasting; his the Achans who bring a curse upon the tribes; his are those of whom Jude says, "certain men crept in unawares who were before of old ordained to this condemnation." These adulterate the church, and by so doing, they weaken and defile it, and bring it much grief and dishonour. When *the Lord* adds to the church, that is quite another matter. Moreover, the church itself cannot avoid adding some who should not be received. With the greatest possible care and prudence we shall still make mistakes, and some are thus added whom the Lord never added to the church. You have heard Mr. Hill's story of meeting a man in the street one night, who hiccuped up to him and said, "How do you do, Mr. Hill? I am one of your converts." "Yes," said Rowland, "I should say you are, but you are none of God's, or else you would not be drunk." Converts of that sort are far too numerous,—converts of the preacher, converts of friends, or converts of a certain fashion of making profession, but not true-born children of the Lord. Dear friends, I invite all of you who are thinking about joining the church, to search and see whether you are such as the Lord would add to a church. If you are, you have been converted by the Lord, you have been wounded by the Lord, and you have been healed by the Lord, and in the Lord is your righteousness and trust. It has not been man's doing; whoever may have been the instrument, the Holy Spirit has wrought all your works in you. You must have been the subject of a divine agency; something more than you could do for yourself or any man could do for you must have been wrought in you by the Lord. He who made you has new made you. Oh, dear friends, who love the Lord, join in earnest prayer that the Lord would add to the church daily of the saved ones, for we long for such.

Then, *additions to the church of a right kind are described in the text by the words, "such as should be saved,"* only those words are not quite a correct translation of the original. I suppose they were borrowed from the vulgar Latin, they are not in the Greek. The translation should be either "The Lord added to the church daily the saved," or "The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." Saved persons were added to the church, and only such are fit to be added. We are not authorised to receive into our number those who desire to be saved, as certain brethren do: I commend their design in so doing, but I am sure they have not Scripture for it. Those who are being saved, in whom the work of salvation is really begun, are the only proper candidates, and these are spoken of in the forty-fourth verse as "believers." The proper persons to be added to the visible church of Christ are those who believe to the salvation of their souls, who are from day to day experiencing the saving power of the name of Jesus by being delivered from sin, by being saved from the customs of the world, by being saved in the sense of sanctified from the various corruptions and lusts which rule among the sons of men. These are the sort of persons who should be added to the church. So let the question go round,—Am I saved? Have I believed in Jesus? If I have, the process of salvation within me is going on, I am being delivered from the reigning, ruling power of sin

each day; I am being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, and I shall be kept and presented at last spotless before the presence of God with exceeding joy. We set the door wide open to all who are saved, however little their faith may be. The church has no right to exclude any of the saved because their knowledge or experience is not that of advanced believers. If they believe in Jesus and are saved, the babes are of the family and ought to be received, the lambs belong to the flock and ought not to be kept outside the fold. Church membership is not a certificate of advanced Christianity, it is simply the recognition of the profession of saving faith in Jesus Christ. May the Lord add to this church many of the saved, and may we sit at the Lord's table together and sing of redeeming grace and dying love, as those who love the Saviour. Come hither, ye who are the Lord's little ones, but far hence, ye unbelievers and unregenerate.

Again the text says, "The Lord *added* to the church daily such as should be saved." They were really "*added*" to the church. I am afraid certain persons' names are added to the church, but they themselves are not. They increase our numbers, they are added like figures on a slate, but they do not augment our strength. The church is a vital body, and to add to a vitalised body requires a divine operation. The church is like a tree; if you want to add to a tree you cannot take a dead bough and tie it on, that is not adding to it, but incumbering it. To add to a tree there must be grafting done, which requires skill, and the branch, itself alive, must be knit to the living trunk by a living junction, so that the vital sap of the tree shall flow into the grafted bough. A true church is a living thing, and only living men and women made alive by the Spirit of God are fit to be grafted into it, and the grafting must be made by the Lord himself, otherwise it is no true addition to the church of God. Some members are only tied on to the church, and they are neither use nor ornament, as a dead bough fastened to a tree would add no beauty to it, and would certainly bring forth no fruit. There must be a living union, so that the life which is in the church shall join with the life that is in the man, and the one life of the one quickening Spirit shall flow through the whole of the body. When I hear professors railing at the churches to which they belong, when I see disunion and disaffection among church members, I can well understand that the Lord never added them; but it would be a great mercy to the church if the Lord would take them away. When the Lord adds them, added they are for time and for eternity, and they can say to the church, "Where thou dwellest I will dwell; thy people shall be my people, for thy God is my God."

One more point in the text is this, that "the Lord added to the church *daily* such as should be saved." There were additions to the church every day. Some churches, if they have an addition once in twelve months make as much noise over that one as a hen does when she has laid an egg. Now, in the early church they would not have been contented with so small an increase; they would have gone weeping and mourning all over Jerusalem if there had been additions but once in the year. But, cries one, "If we have an addition every month, is not that enough?" Well, it is enough for some people, but when hearts are warm and full

of love to Christ, we want him to be praised from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, and we long to have added to the church daily of such as are saved; and why not? But, you reply, we are not daily preaching. That may be, but we ought to be; if not daily in the pulpit, there should be the daily preaching of the life, and if all the members of the church were daily teaching of Jesus Christ from house to house, a daily sowing would bring a daily reaping; if we were daily praying with earnestness, and daily using every effort we could by the power of the Holy Spirit, and if daily the church abode in fellowship with her Master, we should soon see added to it daily of those who are saved. "Why do we not see it," says one, "in many churches?" Why, because many churches do not believe in it. If there were many converts added to them, they would say, "Yes, we hear of a great many additions, but what are they? We hope they will hold on," or some such ungenerous remark. If to some churches there should come a large increase, there are brethren who would not believe it to be genuine, and would despise the little ones. God will not cease his children to be born where there are none to nurse them; he will be sure not to send converts to churches which do not want them. He will not have his lambs snarled over as if they were so many young wolves, and kept out in the cold by months together to see whether they will howl or bleat. He loves to see his people watchful for new converts, and watchful over them. The Good Shepherd would have us feed his lambs, gather them in from the cold field of the world, and carry them to some warm sheltered place, and nurture them for him. When he sees a church ready to do that, then will he send them his lambs, but not till then.

II. That brings me to the second point, which is this:—ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH, UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS MAY WE EXPECT THEM ON A LARGE SCALE?

Turn to the chapter again and we shall have our answer. We may expect additions to every church of God on a large scale when she has first of all a *Holy Ghost ministry*. Peter was no doubt a man of considerable natural abilities, he was also a warm-hearted, fervent man, just such an one as would have power over his fellow-men, because of the enthusiasm which dwelt in himself; but for all this Peter had never seen three thousand persons converted until he had been baptized with the Holy Ghost. After the tongue of fire had sat upon Peter's head, he was another man from what he had ever been before. If, dear brethren, we are to see large multitudes converted, the power of the preacher must lie in his being filled with the Holy Ghost. I fear me that many churches would not be content with a ministry whose power would lie solely in the Holy Spirit. I mean this, that they judge a minister by his elaboration of style, or beauty of imagery, or degree of culture; and if he be a man of such refined speech that only a select few can understand him, he is a favourite with what is considered to be "a respectable church." Some despise a preacher whom the common people hear gladly, who uses great plainness of speech, and discards the words which man's wisdom teaches. They complain that he is only fit to address the tag-rag of the people, and for this they turn their backs upon him. They want not

the fire of the Spirit, but the flash of oratory; not the rushing wind of the Holy Ghost, but the perfumed zephyrs of "high culture." The jingle of rhetoric has more attraction for them than the certain sound of the trumpets of the sanctuary. May God have mercy upon the church that has got into such a miserable state, and is so wanting in true education, for where a church is educated by the Lord she understands that salvation is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of God. Plainness of speech is the perfection of gospel utterance, for the Master himself so spake. Men of studied elocution, who can pile up a climax, and cap it with a dainty piece of poetry, are not the men whom God the Holy Spirit honours to be soul-winners. Have you not heard fine orations, which have perfectly charmed you by their beauty, and yet after you have heard them you have felt that if the Lord did bless such sermons to the conversion of anybody it would be a novelty upon the face of the earth, for there was little of Christ in them, and none of the unction of the Holy One? Great sermons are often great sins, and "intellectual treats" are frequently a mess of savoury pottage made of unclean meats.

A Holy Ghost ministry, if Peter be the model, is one which is bold, clear, telling, persuasive—one which tells men that Jesus is the Christ, and that they have crucified him, and calls upon them to repent and turn unto the Lord. The truly sent preacher speaks out straight and plain, and home to the conscience, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. The Holy Ghost minister chooses Jesus for his main theme, as Peter did. He did not speak to them about modern science and the ways of twisting Scripture into agreement with it. He cared nothing for the mannderings of the Rabbis or the philosophies of the Greeks; but he went right on setting forth Christ crucified and Christ risen from the dead. When he had preached Christ, he made a pointed personal appeal to them and said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you." He was not afraid to give such an exhortation; he was not like some who say, "We must warn sinners and then leave them; we may preach Christ to them, but may not bid them repent;" but he came boldly forth with the gospel exhortation and left it to his Master to send it home by the power of the Holy Spirit. That was the sort of sermon which God blesses. The man was full of God, and God shone through the man, and worked with him, and remission of sins was sought for and was found through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by a vast number of souls. May God send to all his churches a Holy Ghost ministry!

But if there are to be many additions to the church it must next be a *Holy Ghost church*. Note that. What is a Holy Ghost church? Well, it is a church baptised into his power, and this will be known first by its being *stedfast*. Read the 42nd verse: "And they continued stedfast." He will not bless a church which is excited and then relapses, is carried away by every novelty, and does not know what it believes, but a church which abides in Jesus and in his truth.

They were stedfast in four points. *In the apostle's doctrine*. They were a doctrinal church, they believed in being stedfast in fixed truth; they did not belong to the shifty generation of men who plead that their views are progressive, and that they cannot hold themselves

bound by a plain creed. Dear brethren and sisters, never give up the good old truths of the gospel. Let no excitement, even though it be the whirlwind of a revival, ever sweep you off your feet concerning the great doctrines of the cross. If God does not save men by truth he certainly will not save them by lies, and if the old gospel is not competent to work a revival, then we will do without the revival; we will keep to the old truth, anyhow, come what may! Our flag is nailed to the mast.

Next they were steadfast *in fellowship*. They loved each other, and they continued doing so. They conversed with one another about the things of God, and they did not give up the converse. They helped each other when they were in need, and they continued in such liberality. They were true brethren, and their fellowship was not broken.

Next they continued *in the breaking of bread*, which is a delightful ordinance, and never to be despised or under-estimated. As often as they could they showed Christ's death till he should come. They delighted to enjoy the dear memorials of his sacred passion, both in the assembly and from house to house.

They remained also steadfast *in prayer*. Mark that! God cannot bless a church which does not pray, and churches must increase in supplication if they would increase in strength. Sacred importunity must besiege the throne of God, and then the blessing will be yielded. Oh, children of the heavenly King, ye hamper the Spirit and hinder the blessing if ye restrain prayer.

Here were four points, then, in which the church was steadfast, and God blessed it.

Note next that it was a *united* church. We read of them that they were so united that they had all things in common, and they continued daily with one accord in the temple. There were no parties among them, no petty strifes and divisions, they loved the Lord too well for that. The Sacred Dove takes his flight when strife comes in. If you divide the church within itself, you also divide it from the mighty operations of the Spirit of God. Be ye full of love to one another, and then ye may expect that God the Holy Ghost will fill you with blessing.

They were a *generous* church as well as a united church. They were so generous that they threw in their property into a common stock lest any should be in need. They were not communists, they were Christians; and the difference between a communist and a Christian is this—a communist says, "All yours is mine;" while a Christian says, "All mine is yours;" and that is a very different thing. The one is for getting, and the other for giving. These believers acted in such a generous spirit one to the other, that it seemed as if nobody accounted that what he had belonged to himself, but generously gave of it to the necessities of others. I do not believe the Lord will ever bless a stingy church. There are churches whose minister has anxiously to inquire how he shall even provide food and raiment for his household, and yet these churches are not very poor. There are churches where more is paid per annum for cleaning the shoes of the worshippers than they spend upon the cause of Christ; and where this is the case no great good will be done. The Lord will never bless a synagogue of

misers; if they are churls they may keep their worship to themselves for God is known as a generous God, and he loves to have a generous people.

Again, these people were in such a condition that *their houses were holy places*. I want you to notice this, that they were breaking bread from house to house, and did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. They did not think that religion was meant only for Sundays, and for what men now-a-days call the House of God. Their own houses were houses of God, and their ordinary meals were so mixed and mingled with the Lord's Supper that to this day the most cautious student of the Bible cannot tell when they were eating their common meals, and when they began eating the Supper of the Lord. They elevated their meals into diets for worship: they so consecrated everything with prayer and praise that all around them was holiness unto the Lord. I wish our houses were thus dedicated to the Lord, so that we worshipped God all the day long, and made our dwellings temples for the living God. A great dignitary not long ago informed us that there is great efficacy in daily prayer in the parish church; he even asserted that, however few might attend, it was more acceptable than any other worship. I suppose that prayer in the parish church with nobody to join in it except the vicar and the sexton is far more effectual than the largest family gathering in the house of a nobleman. This was evidently his lordship's idea, and I suppose the literature which his lordship was best acquainted with was of such an order as to have led him to draw that inference. Had he been acquainted with the Bible and such old-fashioned books, he would have learned rather differently, and if some one should make him a present of a New Testament, it might perhaps suggest a few new thoughts to him. Does God need a house? He who made the heavens and the earth, does he dwell in temples made with hands? What can ignorance be this! No house beneath the sky is more holy than the place where a Christian lives, and eats, and drinks, and sleeps, and praises the Lord in all that he does, and there is no worship more heavenly than that which is presented by holy families, devoted to the Lord. To sacrifice home worship to public worship is a most erroneous course of action. Morning and evening devotion in a cottage is infinitely more pleasing in the sight of God than all the cathedral pomp which delights the carnal eye and ear. Every truly Christian household is a church, and as such it is competent for the discharge of all the functions of divine worship, whatever they may be. Are we not all priests? Why do we need to call in others to make devotion a performance? Let every man be a priest in his own house. Are you not all kings who love the Lord? Then make your houses palaces of joy and temples of holiness. One reason why the early church had such a blessing was because her members had such homes. When we are like them we shall have "added to the church daily of the saved."

I have already mentioned that they were a *praying church*, and they were accounted greatly for the increase. They were a *devout church*, a church which did not forget any part of the Lord's will. They were a *baptised church*, and they were a *bread-breaking church*, so that they were obedient to Christ in both ordinances. They were also a *joyful*

church. We find that they ate their meat with gladness. Their religion was not of the sombre hue which comes of doubting and fearing. They were believers in a risen Redeemer, and though they knew that they would soon be persecuted, they so rejoiced that everybody could read heaven shining on their faces, and might have known that they believed in the blessed gospel, for they were a blessed people. They were also a *praising* church, for it is said they "praised God, and they had favour with all the people." Oh, may the Lord make this church and all the churches around us to be as holy and joyful as that apostolical community.

III. I must conclude with a word upon that which I wanted most of all to say: WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES DO THESE ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH BRING TO US?

To you who are to be added to the church to-night, and I thank God you are so many,* it involves this responsibility:—Do not come in among us unless you are saved. Judge yourselves with honesty, examine yourselves with care, and although you have gone as far as you have, yet to-night, before I give you the right hand of fellowship, if you are conscious that you are not what you profess to be, I do beseech you still stand back. If you are the weakest of the weak, and the feeblest of the feeble, yet, if you are sincere, come and welcome; but if you are not sincere, do not add to your sin by taking upon you a profession which you cannot keep up, and by declaring a falsehood before the Lord; for if you do so, remember you will not have lied unto man, but unto God himself, in daring to ~~swear~~ *swear* yourselves Christians, while you are unbelievers. Come and welcome if you are believers, and when you come, remember that the responsibility which you undertake in God's strength, is that you live to prove that you have really given yourself up to the church, that you mean to serve Christ with all your heart, that you will seek to promote the holiness and unity of the church which you join, and will strive to do nothing to dishonour her good name or to grieve the Spirit of God. In joining the church, pray to be continued steadfast in doctrine and fellowship. Pray for more grace, that you may be filled with the Spirit of God. Do not come in to weaken us, we are weak enough already. Do not come in to adulterate our purity, we have enough impurity even now. Pray that God may make you a real increase to our prayerfulness, to our holiness, to our earnestness, to our higher life, and then come and welcome, and the Lord be with you!

As for us who shall receive the converts, what is our responsibility? First, to welcome them heartily. Let us open wide the door of our hearts and say, "Come and welcome," for Jesus Christ's sake. After welcoming them we must watch over them, and when so many are added, double care is needed. Of course, no two pastors can possibly watch over this vast assembly of four thousand five hundred professed believers. Let the watching be done by all the members: by the officers of the church first, and then by every individual. I am very thankful that out of the cheering number to be brought in to-night the larger proportion belong to the families of the church. My

* One hundred and seven were to be received in the evening.

brethren and sisters already in Christ, it is fortunate for these young people that they have you to watch over them. Never let it be said that any parent discourages his child, that any guardian discourages the young after they have come forward and avowed their faith. When you notice faults, remember you have faults yourselves: do not tauntingly throw their failing in their teeth as some have unkindly done. Guide them and cheer them on. Help their weakness, bear with their ignorance and impetuosity, and correct their mistakes. Charge you, my beloved sisters, be nursing mothers in the church; and you, my brethren, be fathers to these young people, that they may be enabled by your help through God's Spirit to hold on their way. It is an evil thing to receive members, and never care for them afterwards. Among so many some must escape our supervision, but if the members of the church were watchful this could not be; each would have some one to care for him, each one would have a friend to whom to tell his troubles and his cares. Watch over the church then, I pray you.

And ye elder ones, myself chiefly among you, let our example be such as they can safely follow. Let them not come into the church to find us cold. Let us try, as we see these young ones coming among us, to grow young again in heart and sympathy. In receiving these new members we ought to have, dear brethren, an access of new strength, and a more vigorous life. The church ought to be giving out more light, for here are fresh lamps; she should be doing more for Christ, here are new workers; she should be herself stronger, more daring, more useful, for here are bold soldiers newly enlisted. I think as I see new converts brought in, I see the Lord lighting up new stars to gladden this world's night; I see him swearing in new soldiers to fight Christ's battles; I see him sending out new sowers to sow the plains of the world for the ever-glorious harvest, and I bless and praise and magnify his name with gladness of soul. Heavenly Father, keep them, yea, keep us all, lest any of us, though added to the church on earth, should not be added to the church in heaven. Keep us, that when the muster-roll is read for the last time, we who have had our names inscribed among the saints on earth may find them written amongst the blessed in heaven. May God grant it, and he shall have all the glory. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts ii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—96, 451, 972.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE CROWN OF THORNS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 18TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head."—
Matthew xxvii. 29.

BEFORE we enter the common hall of the soldiers, and gaze upon "the sacred head once wounded," it will be well to consider who and what he was who was thus cruelly put to shame. Forget not the intrinsic excellence of his person ; for he is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person ; he is in himself God over all, blessed for ever, the eternal Word by whom all things were made, and by whom all things consist. Though Heir of all things, the Prince of the kings of the earth, he was despised and rejected of men, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ;" his head was scornfully surrounded with thorns for a crown, his body was bedecked with a faded purple robe, a poor reed was put into his hand for a sceptre, and then the ribald soldiery dared to stare into his face, and worry him with their filthy jests :—

"The soldiers also spit upon that face
Which angels did desire to have the grace,
And prophets once to see, but found no place.
Was ever grief like mine ?"

Forget not the glory to which he had been accustomed aforetime, for ere he came to earth he had been in the bosom of the Father, adored of cherubim and seraphim, obeyed by every angel, worshipped by every principality and power in the heavenly places ; yet here he sits, treated worse than a felon, made the centre of a comedy before he became the victim of a tragedy. They sat him down in some broken chair, covered him with an old soldier's cloak, and then insulted him as a mimic monarch :—

"They bow their knees to me, and cry, Hail king ;
Whatever scoffs and scornfulness can bring,
I am the floor, the sink, where they'd fling.
Was ever grief like mine ?"

No. 1,168.

What a descent his love to us compelled him to make! See how low he fell to lift us from our fall! Do not also fail to remember that at the very time when they were thus mocking him, he was still the Lord of all, and could have summoned twelve legions of angels to his rescue. There was majesty in his misery; he had laid aside, it is true, the glorious pomp imperial of his Father's courts, and he was now the lowly man of Nazareth, but for all that, had he willed it, one glance of those eyes would have withered up the Roman cohorts; one word from those silent lips would have shaken Pilate's palace from roof to foundation; and had he willed it, the vacillating governor and the malicious crowd would together have gone down alive into the pit, even as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram of old. Lo, God's own Son, heaven's darling, and earth's prince, sits there and wears the cruel chaplet which wounds both mind and body at once, the mind with insult, and the body with piercing smart. His royal face was marred with "wounds which could not cease to bleed, trickling faint and slow," yet that "noblest brow and dearest" had once been fairer than the children of men, and was even then the countenance of Immanuel, God with us. Remember these things, and you will gaze upon him with enlightened eyes and tender hearts, and you will be able the more fully to enter into fellowship with him in his griefs. Remember whence he came, and it will the more astound you that he should have stooped so low. Remember what he was, and it will be the more marvellous that he should become our substitute.

And now let us press into the guard-room, and look at our Saviour wearing his crown of thorns. I will not detain you long with any guesses as to what kind of thorns he wore. According to the Rabbis and the botanists there would seem to have been from twenty to twenty-five different species of thorny plants growing in Palestine; and different writers have, according to their own judgments or fancies, selected one and another of these plants as the peculiar thorns which were used upon this occasion. But why select one thorn out of many? He bore not one grief, but all; any and every thorn will suffice; the very dubiousness as to the peculiar species yields us instruction. It may well be that more than one kind of thorn was platted in that crown: at any rate sin has so thickly strewn the earth with thorns and thistles that there was no difficulty in finding the materials, even as there was no scarcity of griefs wherewith to chasten him every morning and make him a mourner all his days.

The soldiers may have used pliant boughs of the acacia, or shittim tree, that unrotting wood of which many of the sacred tables and vessels of the sanctuary were made; and, therefore, significantly used if such was the case. It may have been true, as the old writers generally consider, that the plant was the *spina Christi*, for it has many small and sharp spines, and its green leaves would have made a wreath such as those with which generals and emperors were crowned after a battle. But we will leave the matter; it was a crown of thorns which pierced his head, and caused him suffering as well as shame, and that suffices us. Our inquiry now is, what do we see when our eyes behold Jesus Christ crowned with thorns? There are six things which strike me most, and as I lift the curtain I pray you watch with me, and may the Holy

Spirit pour forth his divine illumination and light up the scene before our wondering souls.

I. The first thing which is seen by the most casual observer, before he looks beneath the surface, is A SORROWFUL SPECTACLE. Here is the Christ, the generous, loving, tender Christ, treated with indignity and scorn; here is the Prince of Life and Glory made an object of derision by a ribald soldiery. Behold to-day the lily among thorns, purity lifting up itself in the midst of opposing sin. See here the sacrifice caught in the thicket, and held fast there, as a victim in our stead to fulfil the ancient type of the ram held by the bushes, which Abraham slew instead of Isaac. Three things are to be carefully noted in this spectacle of sorrow.

Here is Christ's *lowliness and weakness triumphed over* by the lusty legionaries. When they brought Jesus into the guard-room they felt that he was entirely in their power, and that his claims to be a king were so absurd as to be only a theme for contemptuous jest. He was but meanly dressed, for he wore only the smock frock of a peasant—was he a claimant of the purple? He held his peace—was he the man to stir a nation to sedition? He was all wounds and bruises, fresh from the scourger's lash—was he the hero to inspire an army's enthusiasm and overturn old Rome? It seemed rare mirth for them, and as wild beasts sport with their victims, so did they. Many, I warrant you, were the jibes and jeers of the Roman soldiery at his expense, and loud was the laughter amid their ranks. Look at his face, how meek he appears! How different from the haughty countenances of tyrants! To mock his royal claims seemed but natural to a rough soldiery. He was gentle as a child, tender as a woman; his dignity was that of calm quiet endurance, and this was not a dignity whose force these semi-barbarous men could feel, therefore did they pour contempt upon him. Let us remember that our Lord's weakness was undertaken for our sakes: for us he became a lamb, for us he laid aside his glory, and therefore it is the more painful for us to see that this voluntary humiliation of himself must be made the object of so much derision and scorn, though worthy of the utmost praise. He stoops to save us, and we laugh at him as he stoops; he leaves the throne that he may lift us up to it, but while he is graciously descending, the hoarse laughter of an ungodly world is his only reward. Ah me! was ever love treated after so unlovely a sort? Surely the cruelty it received was proportioned to the honour it deserved, so perverse are the sons of men.

"O head so full of bruises!
Brow that its lifeblood loses!
Oh great humility,
Upon his face are falling
Indignities most galling;
He bears them all for me."

It was not merely that they mocked his humility, but *they mocked his claims to be a king*. "Aha," they seemed to say, "is this a king? It must be after some uncouth Jewish fashion, surely, that this poor peasant claims to wear a crown. Is this the Son of David? When will he drive Cæsar and his armies into the sea, and set up a new state,

and reign at Rome. This Jew, this peasant, is he to fulfil his nation's dream, and rule over all mankind? Wonderfully did they ridicule this idea, and we do not wonder that they did, for they could not perceive his true glory. But, beloved, my point lies here, *he was a King* in the truest and most emphatic sense. If he had not been a king, then he would as an impostor have deserved the scorn, but would not have keenly felt it; but being truly and really a king, every word must have stung his royal soul, and every syllable must have cut to the quick his kingly spirit. When the impostor's claims are exposed and held up to scorn, he himself must well know that he deserves all the contempt he receives, and what can he say? But if the real heir to all the estates of heaven and earth has his claims denied and his person mocked at, then is his heart wounded, and rebuke and reproach fill him with many sorrows. Is it not sad that the Son of God, the blessed and only Potentate, should have been thus disgraced.

Nor was it merely mockery, but *cruelty added pain to insult*. If they had only intended to mock him they might have platted a crown of straw, but they meant to pain him, and therefore they fashioned a crown of thorns. Look ye, I pray you, at his person as he suffers under their hands. They had scourged him till probably there was no part of his body which was not bleeding beneath their blows except his head, and now that head must be made to suffer too. Alas, our whole head was sick, and our whole heart faint, and so he must be made in his chastisement like to us in our transgression. There was no part of our humanity without sin, and there must be no part of his humanity without suffering. If we had escaped in some measure from iniquity, so might he have escaped from pain, but as we had worn the foul garment of transgression, and it covered us from head to foot, even so must he wear the garments of shame and derision from the crown of his head even to the sole of his foot.

"O Love, too boundless to be shown
By any but the Lord alone!
O Love offended, which sustains
The bold offender's curse and pains!
O Love, which could no motive have,
But mere benignity to save."

Beloved, I always feel as if my tongue were tied when I come to talk of the sufferings of my Master. I can think of them, I can picture them to myself, I can sit down and weep over them, but I know not how to paint them to others. Did you ever know pen or pencil that could? A Michael Angelo or a Raphael might well shrink back from attempting to paint this picture; and the tongue of an archangel might be consumed in the effort to sing the griefs of him who was loaded with shame because of our shameful transgressions. I ask you rather to meditate than to listen, and to sit down and view your Lord with your own loving eyes rather than to have regard to words of mine. I can only sketch the picture, roughly outlining it as with charcoal; I must leave you to put in the colours, and then to sit and study it, but you will fail as I do. Dive we may, but we cannot reach the depths of this abyss of woe and shame. Mount we may, but these storm-swept hills of agony are still above us.

II. Removing the curtain again from this sorrowful spectacle, I see here a SOLEMN WARNING which speaks softly and meltingly to us out of the spectacle of sorrow. Do you ask me what is that warning? It is a warning against our ever committing the same crime as the soldiers did. "The same!" say you; "why, we should never put a crown of thorns for that dear head." I pray you never may; but there are many who have done, and are doing it. Those are guilty of this crime who, as these soldiers did, *deny his claims*. Busy are the wise men of this world at this very time all over the world, busy in gathering thorns and twisting them, that they may afflict the Lord's Anointed. Some of them cry, "Yea, he was a good man, but not the Son of God;" others even deny his superlative excellence in life and teaching; they cavil at his perfection, and imagine flaws where none exist. Never are they happier than when impugning his character. I may be addressing some avowed infidel here, some sceptic as to the Redeemer's person and doctrine, and I charge him with crowning the Christ of God with thorns every time that he invents bitter charges against the Lord Jesus, and utters railing words against his cause and his people. Your denial of his claims, and especially your ridicule of them, is a repetition of the unhappy scene before us. There are some who ply all their wit, and tax their utmost skill for nothing else but to discover discrepancies in the gospel narratives, or to conjure up differences between their supposed scientific discoveries and the declarations of the Word of God. Full often have they torn their own hands in weaving crowns of thorns for him, and I fear some of them will have to lie upon a bed of thorns when they come to die, as the result of their displays of scientific research after briars with which to afflict the Lover of mankind. It will be well if they have not to lie on worse than thorns for ever, when Christ shall come to judge them and condemn them and cast them into the lake of fire for all their impieties concerning him. Oh, that they would cease this useless and malicious trade of weaving crowns of thorns for him who is the world's only hope, whose religion is the lone star that gilds the midnight of human sorrow, and guides mortal man to the port of peace! Even for the temporal benefits of Christianity the good Jesus should be treated with respect; he has emancipated the slave, and uplifted the down-trodden; his gospel is the charter of liberty, the scourge of tyrants, and the death of priests. Spread it and you spread peace, freedom, order, love, and joy. He is the greatest of philanthropists, the truest friend of man, wherefore then array yourselves against him, ye who talk of progress and enlightenment? If men did but know him they would crown him with diadems of reverent love, more precious than the pearls of Ind, for his reign will usher in the golden age, and even now it softens the rigour of the present, as it has removed the miseries of the past. It is an ill business, this carping and cavilling, and I beseech those engaged in it to cease their ungenerous labours, unworthy of rational beings and destructive to their immortal souls.

This crowning with thorns is wrought in another fashion by *hypocritical professions of allegiance to him*. These soldiers put a crown on Christ's head, but they did not mean that he should be king; they

put a sceptre in his hand, but it was not the substantial ivory rod which signifies real power, it was only a weak and slender reed. Therein they remind us that Christ is mocked by insincere professors. O ye who love him not in your inmost souls, ye are those who mock him : but you say, "Wherein have I failed to crown him ? Did I not join the church ? Have I not said that I am a believer ?" Oh, but if your hearts are not right within you, you have only crowned him with thorns ; if you have not given him your very soul, you have in awful mockery thrust a sceptre of reed into his hand. Your very religion mocks him. Your lying professions mock him. Who hath required this at your hands, to tread his courts ? You insult him at his table ! You insult him on your knees ! How can you say you love him, when your hearts are not with him ? If you have never believed in him and repented of sin, and yielded obedience to his command, if you do not own him in your daily life to be both Lord and King, I charge you lay down the profession which is so dishonouring to him. If he be God, serve him ; if he be King, obey him ; if he be neither, then do not profess to be Christians. Be honest and bring no crown if you do not accept him as King. What need again to insult him with nominal dominion, mimic homage, and pretended service ? O ye hypocrites, consider your ways, lest soon the Lord whom ye provoke should ease him of his adversaries.

In a measure the same thing may be done by those who are sincere, but through want of watchfulness *walk so as to dishonour their profession*. Here, if I speak rightly, I shall compel every one of you to confess it in your spirits that you stand condemned ; for every time that we act according to our sinful flesh we crown the Saviour's head with thorns. Which of us has not done this ? Dear head, every hair of which is more precious than fine gold, when we gave our hearts to thee we thought we should always adore thee, that our whole lives would be one long psalm, praising and blessing and crowning thee. Alas, how far have we fallen short of our own ideal ! We have hedged thee about with the briers of our sin. We have been betrayed into angry tempers, so that we have spoken unadvisedly with our lips ; or we have been worldly, and loved that which thou abhorrest, or we have yielded to our passions, and indulged our evil desires. Our vanities, follies, forgetfulnesses, omissions, and offences have set upon thy head a coronet of dishonour, and we tremble to think of it. Oh, cruel hearts and hands to have so maltreated the Well-beloved, whom it should have been our daily care to glorify ! Do I speak to any backslider whose open sin has dishonoured the cross of Christ ? I fear I must be addressing some who once had a name to live, but now are numbered with the dead in sin. Surely if there be a spark of grace in you, what I am now saying must cut you to the quick, and act like salt upon a raw wound to make your very soul to smart. Do not your ears tingle as I accuse you deliberately of acts of inconsistency which have twisted a thorny crown for our dear Master's head ? It is assuredly so, for you have opened the mouths of blasphemers, taught gainsayers to revile him, grieved the generation of his people, and made many to stumble. Ungodly men have laid your faults at the door of the innocent Saviour ; they have said "This is your religion." You have grown the

thorns, but he has had to wear them. We call your offences inconsistencies, but worldly men regard them as the fruit of Christianity, and condemn the vine because of your sour clusters. They charge the holy Jesus with the faults of his erring followers. Dear friends, is there not room to look at home in the case of each one of us? As we do so, let us come with the sorrowful and loving penitent, and wash his dear feet with tears of repentance, because we have crowned his head with thorns.

Thus our thorn-crowned Lord and Master stands before us as a sorrowful spectacle, conveying to us a solemn warning.

III. Lifting the veil again, in the person of our tortured and insulted Lord we see TRIUMPHANT ENDURANCE. He could not be conquered, he was victorious even in the hour of deepest shame.

"He with unflinching heart
Bore all disgrace and shame,
And 'mid the keenest smart
Lov'd on, yea lov'd the same."

He was bearing at that moment, first, *the substitutionary griefs* which were due to him because he stood in our place, and from bearing them he did not turn aside. We were sinners, and the reward of sin is pain and death, therefore he bore the chastisement of our peace. He was enduring at that time what we ought to have endured, and draining the cup which justice had mingled for us. Did he start back from it? Oh, no. When first he came to drink of that worm-wood and gall in the garden he put it to his lips, and the draught seemed for an instant to stagger even his strong spirit. His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. He was like one demented, tossed to and fro with inward agony. "My Father," said he, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Thrice did he utter that prayer, while every portion of his manhood was the battle-field of legions of griefs. His soul rushed out at every pore to find a vent for its swelling woes, his whole body being covered with gory sweat. After that tremendous struggle the strength of love mastered the weakness of manhood; he put that cup to his lips and never shrank, but he drank right on till not a dreg was left; and now the cup of wrath is empty, no trace of the terrible wine of the wrath of God can be found within it. At one tremendous draught of love the Lord for ever drank destruction dry for all his people. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that hath risen again," and "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Now surely endurance had reached a very high point when he was made to endure the painful mockery which our text describes, yet he quailed not, nor removed from his settled purpose. He had undertaken, and he would go through. Look at him, and see there a miracle of patient endurance of griefs which would have sent a world to hell had he not borne them on our behalf.

Besides the shame and suffering due for sin, with which it pleased the Father to bruise him, he was enduring *a superfluity of malice from the hate of men*. Why needed men have concentrated all their scorn

and cruelty into his execution? Was it not enough that he must die? Did it give pleasure to their iron hearts to rack his tenderest sensibilities? Wherefore these inventions for deepening his woe? Had any of us been thus derided we should have resented it. There is not a man or woman here who could have been silent under such indignities, but Jesus sat in omnipotence of patience, possessing his soul right royally. Glorious pattern of patience, we adore thee as we see how malice could not conquer thine almighty love! The pain which he had endured from the scourges caused him to throb with exquisite anguish, but we read neither of tears nor groans, much less of angry complaints or revengeful threats. He does not seek for pity, or make one appeal for lenity. He does not ask wherefore they torture or why they mock. Brave witness! Courageous martyr! Suffering exquisitely thou dost also suffer calmly. Such a perfect frame as his, his body being conceived without sin, must have been capable of tortures which our bodies, unstrung by sin, cannot feel. His delicate purity felt a horror of ribald jests which our more hardened spirits cannot estimate, yet Jesus bore all, as only the Son of God could bear it. They might heap on the load as they would, he would only put forth more endurance, and bear it all, but shrink or quail he would not.

I venture to suggest that such was the picture of patience which our blessed Lord exhibited that it may have moved some even of the soldiery themselves. Has it ever occurred to you to ask how Matthew came to know all about that mockery? Matthew was not there. Mark also gives an account of it, but he would not have been tolerated in the guard-room. The Prætorians were far too proud and rough to tolerate Jews, much less disciples of Jesus, in their common hall. Since there could have been nobody there except the legionaries themselves, it is well to inquire—Who told this tale? It must have been an eye-witness. May it not have been that centurion who in the same chapter is reported to have said, "Certainly this was the Son of God"? May not that scene as well as the Lord's death have led him to that conclusion? We do not know, but this much is very evident, the story must have been told by an eye-witness, and also by one who sympathised with the sufferer, for to my ear it does not read like the description of an unconcerned spectator. I should not wonder—I would almost venture to assert—that our Lord's marred but patient visage preached such a sermon that one at least who gazed upon it felt its mysterious power, felt that such patience was more than human, and accepted the thorn-crowned Saviour as henceforth his Lord and his King. This I do know, that if you and I want to conquer human hearts for Jesus we must be patient too; and if, when they ridicule and persecute us, we can but endure without repining or retaliation, we shall exercise an influence which even the most brutal will feel, and to which chosen minds will submit themselves.

IV. Drawing up the veil again, I think we have before us, in the fourth place, in the person of the triumphant sufferer, a SACRED MEDICINE. I can only hint at the diseases which it will cure. These blood-besprinkled thorns are plants of renown, precious in heavenly surgery if they be rightly used. Take but a thorn out of this crown and use it as a lancet, and it will let out the hot blood of

passion and abate the fever of pride; it is a wonderful remedy for swelling flesh and grievous boils of sin. He who sees Jesus crowned with thorns will learn to look on self, except it be through tears of contrition. This thorn at the breast will make men sing, but not with notes of self-congratulation, the notes will be those of a dove mourning for her mate. Gideon taught the men of Succoth with thorns, but the lessons were not so salutary as those which we learn from the thorns of Jesus. The sacred medicine which the good Physician brings to us in his thorny chaplet acts as a tonic, and strengthens us to endure without depression whatever shame or loss his service may bring upon us:—

“Who defeats my fiercest foes?
 Who consoles my saddest woes?
 Who revives my fainting heart,
 Healing all its hidden smart?
 Jesus crowned with thorns.”

When you begin to serve God, and for his sake endeavour to benefit your fellow-mortals, do not expect any reward from men, except to be misunderstood, suspected, and abused. The best men in the world are usually the worst spoken of. An evil world cannot speak well of holy lives. The sweetest fruit is most pecked at by the birds, the most heaven-nearing mountain is most beaten by the storms, and the loveliest character is the most assailed. Those whom you would save will not thank you for your anxiety, but blame you for your interference. If you rebuke their sins they will frequently resent your warnings, if you invite them to Jesus, they will make light of your entreaties. Are you prepared for this? If not, consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself lest ye be weary and faint in your minds. If you succeed in bringing many to Christ, you must not reckon upon universal honour, you will be charged with self-seeking, popularity-hunting, or some such crime; you will be misrepresented, belied, caricatured, and counted as a fool or a knave by the ungodly world. The probabilities are that the crown you will win in this world, if you serve God, will contain more spikes than sapphires, more briars than beryls. When it is put upon your head pray for grace to wear it right gladly, counting it all joy to be like your Lord. Say in your heart, “I feel no dishonour in this dishonour. Men may impute shameful things to me, but I am not ashamed. They may degrade me, but I am not degraded. They may cast contempt upon me, but I am not contemptible.” The Master of the house was called Beelzebub and spit upon, they cannot do worse to his household, therefore we scorn their scorn. Thus are we nerved to patience by the patience of the despised Nazarene.

The thorn crown is also a remedy for discontent and affliction. When enduring bodily pain we are apt to wince and fret, but if we remember Jesus crowned with thorns, we say—

“His way was much rougher and darker and mine;
 Did Christ my Lord suffer, and shall I repine?”

And so our complaints grow dumb; for very shame we dare not com-

pare our maladies with his woes. Resignation is learned at Jesus' feet, when we see our great Exemplar made perfect through suffering.

The thorn crown is a cure for care. We would cheerfully wear any array which our Lord may prepare for us, but it is a great folly to plat needless thorn crowns for ourselves. Yet I have seen some who are, I hope, true believers take much trouble to trouble themselves, and labour to increase their own labours. They haste to be rich, they fret, they toil, they worry, and torment themselves to load themselves with the burden of wealth; they wound themselves to wear the thorny crown of worldly greatness. Many are the ways of making rods for our own backs. I have known mothers make thorn crowns out of their children whom they could not trust with God, they have been worn with family anxieties when they might have rejoiced in God. I have known others make thorn crowns out of silly fears, for which there were no grounds whatever; but they seemed ambitious to be fretful, eager to prick themselves with briers. O believer, say to thyself, "My Lord wore my crown of thorns for me; why should I wear it too?" He took our griefs and carried our sorrows that we might be a happy people, and be able to obey the command, "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." Ours is the crown of loving kindness and tender mercies, and we wear it when we cast all our care on him who careth for us.

That thorn crown cures us of desire for the vainglories of the world, it dims all human pomp and glory till it turns to smoke. Could we fetch hither the Pope's triple crown, or the imperial diadem of Germany, or the regalia of the Czar of All the Russias, what of them all compared with Jesus' crown of thorns? Let us set some great one on his throne, and see how little he looks when Jesus sits beside him. What is there kingly in being able to tax men, and live upon their labours, giving little in return? The royalest thing is to lay them all under obligations to our disinterested love, and be the fountain of blessing to them. Oh, it takes the glitter from your gold, and the lustre from your gems, and the beauty from all your dainty gewgaws, to see that no imperial purple can equal the glory of his blood, no gems can rival his thorns. Show and parade cease to attract the soul when once the superlative excellencies of the dying Saviour have been discerned by the enlightened eye.

Who seeks for ease when he has seen the Lord Christ? If Christ wears a crown of thorns, shall we covet a crown of laurel? Even the fierce Crusader when he entered into Jerusalem, and was elected king, had sense enough to say, "I will not wear a crown of gold in the same city where my Saviour wore a crown of thorns." Why should we desire, like feather-bed soldiers, to have everything arranged for our ease and pleasure? Why this reclining upon couches when Jesus hangs on a cross? Why this soft raiment when he is naked? Why these luxuries when he is barbarously entreated? Thus the thorn crown cures us at once of the vainglory of the world, and of our own selfish love of ease. The world's minstrel may cry, "Ho, boy, come hither, and crown me with rose buds!" but the voluptuary's request is not for us. For us neither delights of the flesh nor the pride of life can have charms while the Man of Sorrows is in view. For us it

remains to suffer, and to labour, till the King shall bid us share his rest.

V. I must notice in the fifth place that there is before us a MYSTIC CORONATION. Bear with my many divisions. The coronation of Christ with thorns was symbolical, and had great meaning in it, for, first, it was to him: a *triumphal crown*. Christ had fought with sin from the day when he first stood foot to foot with it in the wilderness up to the time when he entered Pilate's hall, and he had conquered it. As a witness that he had gained the victory behold sin's crown seized as a trophy! What was the crown of sin? Thorns. These sprang from the curse. "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee," was the coronation of sin, and now Christ has taken away its crown, and put it on his own head. He has spoiled sin of its richest regalia, and he wears it himself. Glorious champion, all hail! What if I say that the thorns constituted a mural crown? Paradise was set round with a hedge of thorns so sharp that none could enter it, but our champion leaped first upon the bristling rampart, and bore the blood-red banner of his cross into the heart of that better new Eden, which thus he won for us never to be lost again. Jesus wears the mural chaplet which denotes that he has opened Paradise. It was a wrestler's crown he wore, for he wrestled not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and he overthrew his foe. It was a racer's crown he wore, for he had run with the mighty and outstripped them in the race. He had well-nigh finished his course, and had but a step or two more to take to reach the goal. Here is a marvellous field for enlargement, and we must stay at once lest we go too far. It was a crown rich with glory, despite the shame which was intended by it. We see in Jesus the monarch of the realms of misery, the chief among ten thousand sufferers. Never say, "I am a great sufferer." What are our griefs compared with his? As the poet stood upon the Palatine Mount and thought of Rome's dire ruin, he exclaimed, "What are our woes and sufferings?" even so I ask, What are our shallow griefs compared with the infinite sorrows of Immanuel? Well may we "control in our close breasts our petty misery." Jesus is, moreover, the prince of martyrs. He leads the van among the noble army of suffering witnesses and confessors of the truth. Though they died at the stake, or pined in dungeons, or were cast to wild beasts, they none of them claim the first rank; but he, the faithful and the true witness, with the thorn crown and the cross, stands at the head of them all. It may never be our lot to join the august band, but if there be an honour for which we might legitimately envy saints of former times, it is this, that they were born in those brave days when the ruby crown was within human grasp, and when the supreme sacrifice might have been made. We are cravens, indeed, if in these softer days we are ashamed to confess our Master, and are afraid of a little scorn, or tremble at the criticisms of the would-be wise. Rather let us follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, content to wear his crown of thorns that we may in his kingdom behold his glory.

VI. The last word is this. In the thorn crown I see a MIGHTY STIMULUS. A mighty stimulus to what? Why, first, to fervent love of him. Can you see him crowned with thorns and not be

drawn to him? Methinks, if he could come among us this morning, and we could see him, there would be a loving press around him to touch the hem of his garment or to kiss his feet. Saviour, thou art very precious to us. Dearest of all the names above, my Saviour and my God, thou art always glorious, but in these eyes thou art never more lovely than when arrayed in shameful mockery. The Lily of the Valley, and the Rose of Sharon, both in one is he, fair in the perfection of his character, and blood-red in the greatness of his sufferings. Worship him! Adore him! Bless him! And let your voices sing "Worthy the Lamb."

This sight is a stimulus, next, to repentance. Did our sins put thorns around his head? Oh, my poor fallen nature, I will scourge thee for scourging him, and make thee feel the thorns for causing him to endure them. What, can you see your best Beloved put to such shame, and yet hold truce or parley with the sins which pierced him? It cannot be. Let us declare before God our soul's keen grief that we should make the Saviour suffer so; then let us pray for grace to hedge our lives around with thorns that from this very day sin may not approach us.

I thought this day of how oftentimes I have seen the blackthorn growing in the hedge all bristling with a thousand prickles, but right in the centre of the bush have I seen the pretty nest of a little bird. Why did the creature place its habitation there? Because the thorns become a protection to it, and shelter it from harm. As I meditated last night upon this blessed subject, I thought I would bid you build your nests within the thorns of Christ. It is a safe place for sinners. Neither Satan, sin, nor death can reach you there. Gaze on your Saviour's sufferings, and you will see sin atoned for. Fly into his wounds! fly, ye timid trembling doves! there is no resting-place so safe for you. Build your nests, I say again, among these thorns, and when you have done so, and trusted Jesus, and counted him to be all in all to you, then come and crown his sacred head with other crowns. What glory does he deserve? What is good enough for him? If we could take all the precious things from all the treasuries of monarchs, they would not be worthy to be pebbles beneath his feet. If we could bring him all the sceptres, mitres, tiaras, diadems, and all other pomp of earth, they would be altogether unworthy to be thrown in the dust before him. Wherewith shall we crown him? Come let us weave our praises together and set our tears for pearls, our love for gold. They will sparkle like so many diamonds in his esteem, for he loves repentance, and he loves faith. Let us make a chaplet this morning with our praises, and crown him as the laureate of grace. This day on which he rose from the dead, let us extol him. Oh, for grace to do it in the heart, and then in the life, and then with the tongue, that we may praise him for ever who bowed his head to shame for us.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xxvii. 11—54.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—336, 282, 275, 417 (v. 1 & 4).

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE FULNESS OF CHRIST THE TREASURY OF THE SAINTS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 19TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."—Col. i. 19.
"And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."—John i. 16.

THESE two texts make up a very beautiful sketch of the plan of salvation. Put before your mind's eye the sinner, empty of all holiness, and of all hope, despairing, and ready to die. Put also before your mind God full of mercy, willing to come and fill that sinner's emptiness, to bring all his communicable attributes, and dwell in that sinner, and give him first the mercy which can blot out his sin, and then the holiness which can lift him up from his ruined condition. Next note the difficulty in the way: God cannot come as half a God, all his attributes must come together, and should the just God come into this guilty sinner to fill his emptiness, the flame of justice must destroy him. It is not possible for God, even our God, who is "a consuming fire," to come into contact with that which is sinful without destroying it. What then? Shall the sinner remain empty, and shall God's fulness remain uncommunicated? Behold the plan which infinite wisdom has devised! The Eternal Son of God becomes man, the divine nature comes in all its fulness and dwells in the Mediator Christ Jesus. Coming into him he was made to feel the mighty burnings of justice, which caused him agony but could not consume him, for in him was no sin. Justice burned and blazed within him, and cast him into a bloody sweat, yea, brought him to the cross and to death, because he stood in the sinner's place; but this golden vessel though heated was not melted; it could contain the divine fire, and yet not be destroyed; and now in Christ Jesus dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and, moreover, the divine nature is in him in such a way as to be capable of communication to the sons of men; of course the essence of Deity is not communicated, for that would be to make men into Gods, but we are "made partakers of the divine

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nature" in the sense of receiving the same character, and becoming the children of God. That which God could not bring to us directly by reason of our inability to receive it, he has now brought to us through a Mediator, by placing it in the man Christ Jesus, that we, coming to him, might freely receive of it. The next step in the plan of salvation is this—that after the fulness of God has come to man in the person of his Son, every one that cometh to him by faith receives of his grace. Salvation is not by what you bring to Christ, but by what you take from him. You are to be receivers first, and then, by-and-by, through the power of grace you shall give forth from yourselves rivers of living water to others. In your first coming you come empty, having nothing but your sin and misery; as empty, undeserving sinners you receive of his fulness, and all your life long continue to do the same. The grace already given is not the climax, or the conclusion, you go on receiving more and more. Grace increases your capacity for grace, and that enlarged capacity becomes filled, and so the fulness of God comes into you till you are filled with it, and you rise from grace to glory, being made like unto God, and fitted to dwell where he is for ever and ever.

Now, unconverted ones, take note that this is the plan of salvation, and the only plan. You must obtain God's love and mercy and holiness by receiving it through the Mediator, Jesus Christ. You have not yet received it: I ask you how long will you tarry without it? You are in some degree aware of your need, for you are not ignorant of the gospel; oftentimes have you heard the voice of its invitation, and have been almost persuaded to receive the fulness revealed in Christ Jesus. How long halt ye between two opinions? How long do ye hesitate? This is the way, the safe way, the suitable way, the only way which is open to you, and it is open to you at this very moment; will your feet never tread it? Will your disobedient steps for ever wander till at last you sink in despair, and die eternally? God have mercy upon you, and bring you to receive of the fulness which the Father has stored up in his Son Christ! Needy sinners, I charge you do not insult the fulness of Christ by thinking that you are full enough yourselves. Never think of putting your own righteousness side by side with the divine, nor think of mixing your tears with Jesus' blood, nor of bringing your prayers or your faith to increase the all-sufficiency of Christ's atoning sacrifice. He wants nought of you; come and take everything from him, for in him all fulness dwells.

As you may not insult his fulness, so I pray you do not neglect it. Do not stand by this fountain and refuse to drink. Do not pass by the riches of his grace as though they were nothing to you, lest haply when you come to die your heart should be wrung with terrible remorse because you have despised the Saviour's love. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Put not off these matters from month to month, but "to-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts." Hasten now unto the place where God himself has come to meet you, namely, in the person of his Son.

Moreover, as I charge you not to neglect the grace of our Lord Jesus, so would I encourage you not to distrust it. All fulness dwells in Jesus, a fulness which is meant to be given out to all who receive it as

the gift of grace. Believe in this fulness; and, empty as you are, do not despair any longer when you remember that Jesus has a supply for every possible need. Come, though your head be bowed with grief, for Jesus never did reject a sinner, and he never can. It is his office and calling to cleanse the guilty and to receive the lost. Come to him now, and may we, ere this service is done, be able all of us to sing, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," and "of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

Let not these words be forgotten by those for whom they are meant, but still I have not taken my text this morning with the view of so preaching from it; I have another aim altogether. Moreover, it will be right for me to say that I do not intend to go into an exposition of these texts, having explained them several times before; I have only taken them with one object, namely, to address myself vehemently to the servants of God, that they may be exhorted to lay hold of the fulness of the power, and holiness, which dwell in their covenant Head. During this last week I have given to my brethren in the Conference a motto which lay on my own heart; it is "Forward! Upward!" These are the watchwords of this morning—Forward! Upward! I want you, dear brethren, to see that every preparation is made for greater growth and greater success. I want you to be encouraged to seize upon that which lies before you, but which is too often treated as if it did not exist, and to rise by the power of the Eternal Spirit to something higher than you have hitherto accomplished or even attempted.

I. My first point this morning is this: THERE IS A GLORIOUS FULNESS IN JESUS. Brethren, if it be so, why are we so weak, unfurnished, and unhappy? There is an infinite fulness in Jesus, a fulness of all that any saint can ever want *to enable him to rise to the highest degree of grace*. If there be anything lacking for the attainment of the divine image in us, it is not a deficiency Christward, it is occasioned by shortcomings in ourselves. If sin is to be overcome, the conquering power dwells in him in its fulness; if virtue is to be attained, sanctifying energy resides in Christ to perfection. If I see before me an eminent child of God, whose conversation is in heaven, I may not dare to say that I am not capable of being as sanctified as he is, for the same Lord is mine as well as his. I have in my flesh no power whatever, for I am emptiness itself, and in me the truth is realised, "Without me ye can do nothing;" but on the other hand the power to do all things lies in Christ, and the power to become fully consecrated streams forth from him. "With God all things are possible." "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and they who dwell in him shall find things impossible with man become simple every-day facts with themselves if they will but have faith in the mediatorial fulness. Brethren, I am going to say nothing but what you all know, and I do not mean to garnish it with finery of words. The truth is that there are many who are barely Christians, and have scarcely enough grace to float them into heaven, the keel of their vessel grating on the gravel all the way; my prayer is that we may reach deep waters, and have so much grace that we may sail like a gallant bark on the broad ocean with a glorious

cargo on board and all colours flying, so that there may be administered unto us an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. For this everything is provided. Christ has not merely placed enough bread on the table to keep us from starving, his oxen and fatlings are killed, he has spread a royal festival. He has not provided a scanty garment which may barely hide your nakedness, but he has brought forth the best robe, and has procured earrings for your ears, jewels for your necks, and a crown royal for your heads; for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell for all his saints. If you have not these riches the fault lies with yourself. It is there, you might have it if you had but faith to take it. Too often we sit down like beggars on the dunghill, and groan and cry because of the poverty of our nature when we ought to be rejoicing in the Lord. I thank God that we can groan, for that is something; but there is a more excellent way, a better gift to be earnestly coveted. In Christ ye are rich to the fulness of riches; get ye up, I pray you, to the high places, and realise for yourselves the fulness of God in Christ Jesus.

The fulness which dwells in our Lord we may rest assured is *sufficient for the conquest of the world*. It is not enough for you or for me that we should be wholly consecrated to Christ, our desire is that the whole world should be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Never can we be satisfied while there remains one sinner unsaved, one idol upon its pedestal, or one single error to darken the minds of men. For Christ we do not desire England only and the civilised nations, but we claim for him the darkest dens of cannibalism and the vilest haunts of piracy. The pennon of the cross shall wave where now black flags poison the breeze; it shall be lifted high where to-day Kalee and Juggernaut set up their ensigns; for the Lord God omnipotent *shall* reign from shore to shore. We have in Christ Jesus all the might which is needed for subduing the nations, for all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth. We have, dear brethren, I fear, too often been considering the amount of money and the number of men which would be needed; indeed, I remember a remarkable paper being read explaining to us how much expenditure it would require to evangelise the world, a calculation which I regarded as vanity of vanities and nothing more, for if mountains of money were put before us it might just as well be shovelled into the infernal deep for all the good it could do, if regarded as at all essential. Our exchequer needs more golden treasure, and, thank God, we have it. Depend upon it, when the church is fit to be trusted with money she will have it. Pecuniary straitness is only an index of lack of grace, and is so far a good thing, because it brings before us in palpable form our real poverty before the Most High. But brethren, for the conquest of the world the strength lies in the man Christ Jesus, and since in him all fulness dwells, we have all the necessary power at our disposal. We are never to say, "Those thieves and criminals are too depraved to be converted," for in our Lord there is fulness of power to convert the most abandoned. We are not to say, "That alley in the darkest part of the city will never be cleansed from its abominations;" Jesus could cleanse Sodom itself. We are never to leave a tribe of savages unevangelised because they are too degraded, nor are we to quail before

an uneducated and subtle nation because it is too sceptical; all power for all cases is in Jesus; he is the armoury of the house of David, in him we shall find a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. Let us go to the armoury, and we shall receive the invincible weapons of our Holy War, ay, and the strength with which to wield them, the might which ensures victory.

Beloved, the text puts away from us, as far as the east is from the west, every conceivable objection that may be raised as to what a saint can do, for surely the very thought of difficulty is rendered absurd by the fact of all fulness residing in our Lord on our behalf. It is not a fulness for teaching merely, but a fulness for convincing; not a fulness for convincing of sin simply, but for converting and bringing to full salvation. It is not a fulness for justifying the believer alone, but a fulness for sanctifying him; and not a fulness for sanctifying him for a little while merely, but a fulness to keep him to the end, a fulness which can fill him with all the fulness of God. Come to whatever place you may, you shall not say, "Here I am at a nonplus," but there will you find a new illustration of the might of the eternal God which dwells in Christ Jesus. The fact is we have a superabundant force in Christ, and if we did but know it, instead of talking about the struggles of the church, and the strain that is put upon us, to hold our own, the joy of the Lord would give such strength to us that we should not remember our own efforts, but like the flood which rushes down the mountain after the rain, the flush of life from Jesus would speed on with a tremendous force, overleaping every obstacle, and filling our souls to the brim. God grant us to feel that we do not serve a little Christ nor a niggard Lord. Our God is the God of the hills as well as the valleys, and in the strength of the Lord Omnipotent we triumph in every place. Only let us serve God in real faith, and we know not what we may live to see. God grant us to know this first truth that there is a fulness in Christ, and in the strength of that fulness may we cry, "Forward and upward."

II. The next encouraging fact is that THE FULNESS IS IN JESUS NOW. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." The glory of the *past* exercises a depressing influence upon many Christians. "We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us the wondrous things which thou didst in their day and in the old time before them," but we dolefully complain that the golden age of Christianity is over, its heroic times are matter of history. Indeed, this feeling is transformed to fact, for scarcely any church now existing realises that it can do what its first promoters did, all appear to be quite sure that these are bad times and but little is to be done in them. We do not expect now-a-days to find a Methodist so full of fire as the first field-preachers, the Quakers are never fanatical, and even the Primitives are not Ranters now; the old reproach has ceased because the old ardour which provoked it has cooled down. So far so bad. I see grave cause for sorrow in all this. A people are in an evil case when all their heroism is historical. We read the biographies of former worthies with great wonder and respect, but we do not attempt to follow in their steps with equal stride. Wherefore not? It has pleased the Father that in Jesus all fulness should dwell, a

fulness for Paul, a fulness for Luther, a fulness for Whitfield, and blessed be God, a fulness for me, and a fulness for you. All that Jesus has given forth has not exhausted him. Christianity has not lost its pristine strength; we have lost our faith, there's the calamity. Oh, ignoble sons of glorious sires, ye have degenerated, but not your Master; and if, even in your degeneracy, you would cast yourselves upon your unchanging God, you would rise to more than the strength of your sires, and do yet greater things than they. The fulness of Jesus is not changed, then why are our works so feebly done? Pentecost, is that to be a tradition? The reforming days, are these to be memories only? I see no reason why we should not have a greater Pentecost than Peter saw, and a Reformation deeper in its foundations, and truer in its upbuildings than all the reforms which Luther or Calvin achieved. We have the same Christ, remember that. The times are altered, but Jesus is the Eternal, and time touches him not. "But we are not such men as they." What, then, cannot God make us such? Are we weaker than they? The fitter to be instruments for the mighty God. Out on the cowardice which thinks the past is never to be outdone! Is not the Lord of Hosts with us? Is anything too hard for him? We must labour to eclipse the past as the sunlight eclipses the brightness of the stars.

The mass of professors have their eye on *the future* only, the good times are coming by-and-by, but they are not here yet. We look forward with much hope to the golden age that is to be, when we shall see the fulness of Jesus, and nations will be born in a day. Brethren, does my text say, "It pleased the Father that in him all fulness shall one day dwell"? I trow not, but in him all fulness *now* dwells. Whatever has been done can be done now, and whatever shall yet be done by his grace can be done to-day. Our laziness puts off the work of conquest, our self-indulgence procrastinates, our cowardice and want of faith make us dote upon the millennium instead of hearing the Spirit's voice to-day. Happy days would begin from this hour if the church would but awake and put on her strength, for in her Lord all fulness dwells. When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? Some doubting ones say, "We do not wonder that there is success in such a place;" but *we* cannot have it. We hear of earnest ministers, and we conclude that where they labour God will send the blessing, but not to our ministry. We conclude that when yonder woman gathers the young people around her, it is no wonder that blessing comes. Does Christ depend on ministers or on holy women? Have you said, "Alas, I cannot have the blessing." Why not? How dare you limit the Holy One of Israel? Ye who dwell in towns where all is cold around you, do ye despair? Is it in your minds that Christ is dependent upon the circumstances in which he has placed his servants? "It pleased the Father that in *him* should all fulness dwell." What if the servants be empty, their Master is not. If the means of grace lack power, grace from above is still omnipotent. Only fly to the fountain, and the dried up streams need not distress you.

Furthermore, our churches believe that there is a great fulness in Christ, and that *sometimes* they ought to enjoy it. The progress of Christianity is to be by tides which ebb and flow. There are to be

revivals like the spring, and these must alternate with long lethargies like the winter. O accursed unbelief, wilt thou always pervert the truth? Wilt thou never understand this word—"It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness *dwell*"? It is not the Lord's purpose that a fulness should reside in Jesus during revivals, and then withdraw. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The highest state of revival should be the normal condition of the church. When her martyrs are most self-sacrificing, her missionaries most daring, her ministers most bold, her members most consecrated, she is even then below her standard, she has not fully reached her high calling: to come down from her position would be sin. God grant us grace to feel that we have not to drink of an intermittent spring, nor to work for Christ with an occasional industry, but as all fulness *dwells* in him, it is ours to believe that to-day we can have all the blessing of a true revival, that to-day we can go forward in the power of God, that at this very hour we lack for nothing which can lift the church into her highest condition of spirituality and power. God grant us to receive grace for grace to-day!

III. Thirdly, THE POSITION OF THIS FULNESS IS RICHLY ENCOURAGING TO US IN THE MATTER OF OBTAINING IT. "It pleased the Father that in *him* should all fulness dwell." Brethren, ye have heard what we have said about the fulness: our words are very poor and poverty-stricken compared with the fact, but listen! The fulness is placed where you can receive it, where you can receive it now, for it is placed in him who is your brother, bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh; it dwells in him who loves to give it, because, as our Head, he delights to communicate with his members. The plenitude of grace dwells in him who is himself yours; since he is yours, all that is in Christ is yours. You need not pray as if you had no inheritance in the blessing which you seek. Christ is the trustee of the fulness of God, and the property of it is vested in his people; you have only to ask of him, and he will give you that which is your own already. Why do you hesitate? How can you linger? The Father has placed his grace in Christ because it gratifies his love to his Son. It pleases the heart of the great God to see Jesus adorned with the fulness of deity, and every time Jesus gives out to believers, the great heart of God is gladdened thereby. How can you hesitate about receiving if it pleases God for you to partake in it? You may go with great spirit and comfort, since Jesus himself is honoured by your going to him. He obtains glory by distributing of his fulness to empty sinners, who, when they receive grace, are sure to love him,—how can you think him reluctant to bestow the gift which will increase his glory? Do you not know, too, that when you go to Christ you gain even by the act of going? I am so thankful that Christ has not put my fulness in myself, for then I should not require to go to him so often, or if I did go to him I should not have an errand to go upon of such importance as to justify me in seeking an audience; but now, every time I go to Christ's door I can plead necessity. We go to him because we must go. When is there an hour when a believer does not need to receive from Jesus? Go, then, beloved, since it blesses the church, it honours Christ, it pleases God, and it is the way of soul enrichment for yourselves.

What place of resort could be so attractive as the person of the Well-Beloved? If God had put his fulness into an angel we should not feel greatly drawn to him, but since he has caused it to dwell in Jesus, he has put it where we love to have it, where we feel at home, where we are glad to go full often, yea, where we would love to abide and never to go away, but to be for ever receiving of him.

I delight to think that this fulness is placed in Christ, because he is the man who receives sinners; and, therefore, you saints who have lost your evidences, you believers who have acted inconsistently and have not lived up to your privileges, you may say "we cannot go for this fulness to God himself, but we will joyfully go to the Saviour of sinners." If you have been till now self-deceived, and your experience has all been a mistake, you can still come to the sinner's Saviour, to whom the thief looked up in his expiring hour, and from whom your first mercy came. Come, brethren, why do you hesitate, why do you linger? Ye who know what Christ is, come, I pray you, with swift feet to the place where all you want is stored, and take all your heart requires; yea, come for the highest degrees of grace and for the largest measures of success, and you shall have them, for Christ delights to give exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think.

III. And now I have to pass on to another argument. I want to use each head as a hammer, and may God's own spirit wield it. The next is this, that FROM THIS FULNESS WE HAVE MANY OF US ALREADY RECEIVED. Is not that an argument for still further exercising faith in Jesus? I know of no argument equal to that of practical experience. They must come who have come before; the sweetness of this honey remains upon the tongue and we long for more, and we cannot be satisfied till we have taken up the dripping honeycomb once again. Now, see, beloved, the text says, "Of his fulness have all we received:" that is, all the saints in former days have received of this fulness. There was not in John any good thing but what he received from his Master; there was not in the noble martyr Stephen one grain of courage but what he received from Christ; Paul, Apollos, or Cephas, these had nothing but what they took from him. If they received everything, why should we hesitate to do the same?

Of ourselves it is also true that all our grace came from Jesus. This is true of the greatest saint, and true of the least. Do you recollect when first you received grace? It brings to my mind right joyful memories of the hour when first these eyes looked to him and were lightened, when I received pardon from his dying love and knew myself forgiven. Since your conversion, dear brethren, everything good you have ever had you have received from our Lord. What hast thou drunk out of thine own cistern? What treasure hast thou found in thine own fields? Nakedness, poverty, misery, death, these are the only possessions of nature; but life, riches, fulness, joy, these are gifts of grace through Jesus Christ. Art thou accepted before God? He justified thee. Hast thou been kept? He has preserved thee. Art thou sanctified? He has cleansed thee by his blood. Dost thou know by full assurance thine interest in the Father's love? He gave thee that assurance. All thou hast and all thou ever wilt have, all that, every saint that ever shall be born shall have that is worth the having.

comes out of the fulness of Christ. The serried ranks of the white robed above without exception confess, "Of his fulness have all we received." I hear them sing this morning, as they keep a glorious Sabbath-day above, and this is one sweet stanza of their song, "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." Come then, brethren, what restrains us from receiving? Ah, say you, "I cannot imagine that I can be a Christian of the highest type." Why not? Have you not received life, why should you not receive life more abundantly? Have you not already been pardoned, why should you not have the full assurance of that pardon? Have you not already been taken up from the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, what doth hinder but that Christ should set you upon a rock, and put a new song into your mouth and establish your goings? "But I cannot hope to be so useful as some are." Why not? According to your faith so shall it be to you. God has given you one convert, why cannot he give you a hundred? You have been blessed to a dear child in the Sunday-school, and you have rejoiced over that one jewel as a precious God-send; why should you not dive again, and bring up other pearls for your Immanuel's crown? I would stir in you a sacred ambition, I would provoke you to the highest style of Christian manhood, and the most heroic form of Christian service. What you have received is the pledge of what you may receive; indeed, you have already obtained a good deal more than yet remains to be received. Christ is yours, and by that fact all things are yours. What you now want is included in what you already have; you only require to realise it, by faith to call it your own, and practically to live upon it. May God enable you so to do! Of his fulness have all we received, why should we not receive more?

IV. The last blow of the hammer shall be this—THE RECEIPTS WE HAVE ALREADY HAD ARE NOT TRIFLES, for John says we have received "grace for grace," which is a mode in the Greek language of expressing the superlative. We have received the highest grace, superlative grace. The gift of Jesus Christ is the highest grace that even God himself can bestow, nothing can go beyond that. Listen to this, then: "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" I charge you, let that text enter into your hearts, and when you feel straitened in prayer, and tempted to say, "No, not here, I cannot rise so high, I am not qualified for that attainment," do, I pray you, remember the gifts already received, by which Jesus opens your mouth and bids you ask great things. The Father has given you his Son, how can he deny you anything?

The expression "grace for grace" may mean grace answering to grace, grace which was in accordance with grace already given, grace preparatory to what is yet to come. Has not the Father given you such grace as you had capacity to receive? If there had been more room you would have had more; if you had exercised more faith he would have given you more joy; if you had possessed more hope you would have had more realisation. He has always come up to, and even gone beyond, the measure of our expectancy. Is there in your soul this morning an enlargement? I feel it in my own heart, I feel a dissatisfaction with my present attainments; I pant to know my Lord

better. I am discontented with what I have done for him hitherto, I long to do ten times more for his glory. Do you feel the same? Oh, then he will keep touch with you; yea, he will do exceedingly abundantly above all you ask, or even think. That text does not say, "Above what you *can* ask or think," as people will persist in saying, therein saying what is not true, because we *can* ask and *can* think as great things as God himself will give, and he means us to ask before he gives. Our capacity for asking is, as a general rule, the measure of his giving, but the Scriptures say he will do exceeding abundantly above what you ask or think. Now, are you thinking great things and asking great things? Do not be afraid; the Lord will not let you outstrip him. Be ye enlarged, and as large as your faith so large shall the blessing be.

Then, dear friends, grace for grace may mean grace upon grace, like Pelion upon Ossa, one mountain piled upon another, each grace eclipsing the light of that which went before. This we have already known. When we first believed in Christ pardon for sin seemed everything, but when we came to know that we were justified in Christ Jesus, that appeared to be a much greater blessing; and when we understood that we were adopted and were the sons of God, that new delight surpassed the former joy. The Lord has led you into grace, which has surprised you, and lifted you up from one point to another. I speak to many brethren here who must confess that their present state is very different from their Christian infancy, and they now know what they never thought they could know. Why, there are doctrines that some of you can enjoy this morning which you used to think frightfully high doctrines, and you could not appreciate them, yet they are simplicities to you now; and there are conquests over sin which you could not have achieved in your boyhood, but now in your Christian manhood you can take up dragons and destroy them. Now, dear brethren, as you have been surprised with mercy, you are to be surprised with more mercy, and the Lord says to you, "Son of Man, I will show thee greater favours than these." Greater joys are yet to be known. You have entered the room of silver, that inner door will lead you to a chamber of gold, and beyond that there is a door in the wall, which he that is taught of God shall open, which will admit you into a chamber of diamonds; and when you shall come there and have seen the glory and the exceeding riches of the grace of God, there is an inner chamber yet, where that which eye hath not seen nor ear hath heard, shall be revealed unto you, a joy unspeakable, unthinkable indeed. May we comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.

Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum. We have a fulness in Christ as believers, which we ought to use in the manner following:—

First, believe in great things. Do not sit down, as some do, in the little Meeting House, where about five score brethren meet and expect the Lord to send a convert once in twelve months, and when he does send him, worry him by the month together for fear he should not be one of the right sort, and when he comes in at last rejoice over him, as one that findeth great spoil in having picked up one solitary

soul after twelve months' ministry. Oh, brethren, we have a greater God than this would imply. The little narrow thoughts which Christians have had as to the success of the gospel, cannot have come from a great God, can they? The day was when the very idea of sending the gospel to the heathen was regarded by our orthodox brethren as a piece of Don Quixotism, not to be attempted, and even now, if you say, "All the world for Jesus," they open their eyes and say, "Ah, we are afraid you are tainted with universal redemption, or are going off to the Arminian camp." God grant these dear brethren new hearts and right spirits; at present their hearts are too small to bring him much glory. May they get larger hearts, hearts something like their Lord's, and may they have grace given them to estimate the precious blood at a higher rate, for our Lord did not die to buy a few hundreds of souls, or to redeem to himself a handful of people; he shed his blood for a number which no man can number, and his elect shall excel in multitude the sands which belt the sea. Let us have great faith in what God intends to do.

Believing these great things, let us expect them. Be on the *qui vive* for spiritual miracles. Expect to see hundreds converted. Wonder, when you hear a gospel sermon, that the Holy Ghost does not save three thousand by it. "Ah," says one, "I should be very much astonished if he did." I know you would, and that is why we do not see it, but we ought to wonder that there are not, and when we are as we should be, we shall see greater things than these. There is no weakness with God; that limping sinew is in Jacob's thigh, it is not in the angel's. That palsied arm is man's, not God's, no sinew of his arm can decay. Sirs, think you that he who smote the fields of Zoan with plagues is not Lord of idols and King of heathens? Think you that he who divided the Red Sea cannot lead his people like a flock through the wilderness and bring them into the promised possession? Think you that he cannot bring up his church out of her bondage and set her feet in a large room? The Lord of hosts is with us, therefore let us expect things.

Expecting great things, let us attempt great things. Let us each set about doing something for Christ, in the power of the Holy Ghost. Let us try what can be done. Let us not, if we are Sunday-school teachers, be satisfied with going through the day's lesson and feeling, "There, that will do." Aim at the immediate conversion of every child in the class. Do not let us say as we go round with the tracts this afternoon, "We will leave them and not say a word." Aim at getting a word with every person you meet with about Jesus Christ. As for myself, the preacher, let me come here to preach to you, not with the hope that perhaps here and there one will find a Saviour, but with an earnest cry to heaven that he will comprehend in the lines of his electing and redeeming love the whole mass of you, and make this Tabernacle into a golden casket, in which all of us shall be the jewels, and take it right up and keep it in his bosom for ever.

Last of all, let us not talk about this, but let us set about it. Shall we never have in our midst men who will go among the heathen to preach Jesus Christ? We had two lately, are there not two more? Young men and young women, will you not consecrate your-

selves to the Lord and go into exile for his sake? Have we none such? We have here this morning good women and good men too, who are at work amongst the heathens of the east end of London and the worst parts of our city; are there no others to do the same? There is room for scores of you to be as devoted to God as our dear brother, Dr. Barnardo, or our sister, Miss Macpherson—and why are you not? Why should not the same anointing come upon you and qualify you for useful work? Will you not this very day preach Christ in the streets? Will you not consecrate yourselves to be whole burnt-offerings unto Christ, for him to live, for him to die? O soldiers of the cross, will ye loiter in the march? The enemy still holds citadels which belong to Christ, and ye by a desperate push may seize them. Swift as eagles and strong as lions, press onward and win the victory. Why do ye hesitate? The powers of evil linger not, the hosts of hell are raging, they call up all their strength against the Lord of Hosts, and will ye stand back? Have ye no courage? Is your blood turned to water? Has the Spirit of God departed from you? Oh, let it not be so, but may God launch us upon the enemy like thunderbolts from his own omnipotent hand, and yet may it be seen throughout the world that there are men who have received of the fulness of the Crucified One, and who therefore can give it forth to others, and point them to him, in whom the Father is well pleased that all fulness shall dwell. The Lord be with you all. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John i. 1—34.

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"BY ALL MEANS SAVE SOME."

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 26TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"That I might by all means save some."—1 Corinthians ix. 22.

THE apostle speaks very broadly, and talks about saving men. Some of our extremely orthodox brethren would say at once, "*You save men?* How can man do that? The expression is inaccurate in the extreme. Is not salvation of the Lord from first to last? How can you, Paul, dare to speak of saving some?" Yet Peter had spoken very like this when he said, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation;" indeed, the expression is a little more bold, if anything, and if Peter were alive now he would be called to account. When Paul wrote to Timothy he said to him, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee," which is another instance of language used in a popular sense by a man who had not the fear of critics before his eyes. The apostle did not intend to insinuate that he could save anybody by his own power, and no one thought that he did. He used expressions without guarding them, because he was writing to people who mixed candour with their knowledge of doctrine, and would not wilfully misunderstand him. He did not write for those who must have all the creed in every sermon, and require all statements of the truth to be cut into one shape. The doctrine that salvation is of God alone, and is the work of the Holy Spirit, was dear to him as life itself, and having often proclaimed it he was not afraid of being misunderstood. Our testimony also has for many years been clear upon this point, and therefore we shall venture to be as accurately inaccurate as was the apostle, and to speak of saving souls and winning souls after the manner of ordinary speech.

The expression used gives great prominence to instrumentality, and this is the use and wont of Scripture. There is not much danger just now of exaggerating the power of instrumentality, and looking to the men instead of their Master. The danger seems to lie in

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the opposite direction, in the habit of depreciating both an organised church and a recognised ministry. Frequently have we heard it said of certain revivals that no particular person was engaged in them, neither evangelist nor minister had a hand in the work, and this is thought to be a recommendation, but indeed it is none. I fear that many hopeful beginnings have come to a sudden collapse because faithful and holy ministers have been despised, and a slur has been cast upon ordinary instrumentalities. Men talk thus under the notion that they are honouring God; they are off the track altogether, for God still owns and blesses his chosen ministers, and is honoured thereby, and as he still works by them he would not have us speak disparagingly of them.

The topic of this morning is this: it has pleased God to save souls by his people, and therefore he places in them a sacred longing by all means to save some. He might if he had pleased have called all his chosen to himself by a voice out of the excellent glory, just as he called Saul the persecutor; or he might have commissioned angels to fly throughout the length and breadth of the world, and carry the message of mercy; but in his inscrutable wisdom he has been pleased to bring men to himself by men. The atonement is complete, and the Spirit's power is fully given; all that is needed is that men be led to believe for the salvation of their souls, and this part of salvation is accomplished by the Holy Ghost through the ministries of men. Those who have themselves been quickened are sent to prophesy upon the dry bones. In order that this divine arrangement may be carried out, the Lord has implanted in the hearts of all genuine believers a passion for the salvation of souls: in some this is more lively than in others, but it ought to be a leading feature in the character of every Christian. I shall speak upon this sacred instinct, and deal with it thus: first, *why is it implanted in us?* secondly, *how does it exercise itself?* thirdly, *why is it not more largely manifested?* and fourthly, *how can it be quickened and made more practically efficient?*

I. WHY IS THIS PASSION FOR SAVING OTHERS IMPLANTED IN THE BREASTS OF THE SAVED? For three reasons, I think, among many others; namely, for God's glory, for the good of the church, and for the profiting of the individual.

It is implanted there, first, *for God's glory*. It is greatly to the glory of God that he should use humble instruments for the accomplishment of his grand purposes. When Quintin Matsys had executed a certain wonderful well-cover in iron, it was the more notable as a work of art because he had been deprived of the proper tools while he was executing it, for I think he had little more than his hammer with which to perform that wonderful feat in metal. Now, when we look at God's work of grace in the world, it glorifies him the more when we reflect that he has achieved it by instruments which in themselves would rather hinder than promote his work. No man among us can help God; it is true he uses us, but he could do better without us than with us: by the direct word of power he could do in a moment that which, through the weakness of the instrument, now takes months and years, yet he knows best how to glorify his own name. He puts a longing to save others into our souls, that he may get glory by using us, even us who have little fitness for such work except this passion

he has implanted in our breasts. He graciously uses even our oints, and makes our very infirmities to illustrate the glory of ce, blessing our poorest sermons, prospering our feeblest efforts, vng us to see results even from our stray words. The Lord s himself by making our feebleness to be the vehicle of his and to this end he makes us pant for a work far out of our and sets our hearts a-longing to "save some."

ings glory to God also that he should take sinful men such as , and make us partakers of his nature, and he does this by us fellowship in his bowels of compassion, communion in his wing love. He kindles in our breasts the same fire of love which n his own bosom. In our own little way we look down upon the l sons, and see them a great way off, and have compassion on und would fain fall on their necks and kiss them. The Lord loves owever, after a holy fashion, he desires their sanctification, and alvation by that means; and when we desire the good of our men by means of their conversion, we are walking side by side od. Every real philanthropist is a copy of the Lord Jesus; for it is too low a term to apply to his infinite excellence, yet truly of God is the grandest of all philanthropists. Now, that God by the power of his matchless grace, produce in such cold as ours a burning passion for the salvation of others is a sin-coef of his omnipotent power in the world of mind. To change men so that they pant after the increase of holiness, to render m wills eager for the spread of obedience, and to make wander- erts earnest for the establishment of the abiding kingdom of deemer, this is a mighty feat of the grace of God. That a angel should cleave the air to perform his message is a simple enough, but that a Saul of Tarsus, who foamed at the mouth mity to Christ, should live and die for the winning of souls to is a memorable illustration of the grace of God.

his way the Lord gets great glory over the Arch-enemy, the of the power of the air, for he can say to Satan, "I have d thee, not by the sword of Michael, but by the tongues of I have conquered thee, O thou enemy, not with thunderbolts, h the earnest words and prayers and tears of these my humble la. O mine adversary, I have pitted against thee feeble men men, into whom I have put the love of souls, and these have ray from thee province after province of thy dominions, these apped the fetters of the bondaged ones, these have burst open son doors of those who were thy captives." How illustriously truth seen when the Lord seizes the ringleaders of Satan's army nsforms them into captains of his own host! Then is the smitten in the house of his former friends. Satan desired to ter as wheat, but Peter sifted him in return on the day of Pente- atan made Peter deny his Master, but when restored Peter is Lord all the more, and all the more earnestly did he proclaim ater's name and gospel. The fury of the foe recoils on himself, equers, and where sin abounded grace doth much more abound. Saul, who persecuted the saints, did not he become the apostle ist to the Gentiles, labouring more than any other for the good

cause? Beloved, the ultimate triumph of the cross will be the more admirable because of the manner of its achievement. Good will conquer evil, not by the assistance of governments and the arms of potentates, not by the prestige of bishops and popes, and all their pompous array, but by hearts that burn, and souls that glow, and eyes that weep, and knees that bend in wrestling prayer. These are the artillery of God, by using such weapons as these he not only foils his foes, but triumphs over them in it, confounding the mighty by the weak, the wise by the simple, and the things which are by the things which are not.

Next, the passion for saving souls is implanted for *the church's good* and that in a thousand ways, of which I can only mention a few. First there can be no doubt that the passion for winning souls expends the church's energy in a healthy manner. I have observed that churches which do not care for the outlying population speedily suffer from disunion and strife. There is a certain quantity of steam generated in the community, and if we do not let it off in the right way, it will work in the wrong way, or blow up altogether, and do infinite mischief. Men's minds are sure to work, and their tongues to move, and if they are not employed for good purposes they will assuredly do mischief. You cannot unite a church so completely as by calling out all its forces for accomplishing the Redeemer's grand object. Talents unused are sure to rust, and this kind of rust is a deadly poison to peace, an acrid irritant which eats into the heart of the church. We will therefore by all means save some, lest by some other means we become disunited in heart.

This passion for saving souls not only employs but also draws forth the strength of the church, it awakens her latent energies, and arouses her noblest faculties. With so divine a prize before her she girds up her loins for the race, and with her eye upon her Lord presses forward to the goal. Many a commonplace man has been rendered great by being thoroughly absorbed by a noble pursuit, and what can be nobler than turning men from the road which leads to hell? Perhaps some of those ignoble souls who have lived and died like dumb, driven cattle might have reached the majesty of great lives if a supreme intent had fired them with heroic zeal, and developed their concealed endowments. Happy is the man whose task is honourable, if he do but honourably fulfil it. Lo, God has given to his church the work of conquering the world, the plucking of brands from the burning, the feeding of his sheep and lambs, and this it is which trains the church to deeds of daring and to nobility of soul.

Dear brethren, this common passion for souls knits us together. How often do I feel a fresh bond of union with my beloved brethren and fellow-workers, when I find that I was the means of the conviction of a sinner, whom one of them comforted, and led him to the Saviour, and thus we have a joint possession in the convert. Some times I have been blest of God to the salvation of my hearer, but that hearer was first brought here by yonder friend, and so we become sharers in the joy. Communion in service and success welds the saints together, and is one of the best securities for mutual love.

And, moreover, when new converts are brought into the church

the fact that they are brought in by instrumentality tends to make their fusion with the church an easy matter. It is in this case much the same as with our families. If God had been pleased to create each of us as individual men and women, and drop us down somewhere on the earth, and leave us to find our way to somebody's house, and unite with his family, I daresay we should have had to wander long before we should have been welcomed: but now we come as little ones to those who rejoice to see us, and sing, "Welcome, welcome, little stranger!" We become at once parts of the family, because we have parents and brothers and sisters, and these make no debate about our introduction and consider it no trouble to receive us, though I fear we have never duly rewarded them for their pains. So is it in the church: if God had converted all men one by one, by his Spirit, without instrumentality, they would have been separate grains of sand, hard to unite into a building, and there would have been much difficulty in forming them into one body; but now we are born into the church, and the pastor and others look upon those converted under their instrumentality as their own children, whom they love in the Lord, and the church having shared in the common service by which they are converted feels, "These belong to us, these are our reward;" and so they are taken cordially into the Christian family. This is no small benefit, for it is at once the joy and the strength of the church to be made one by vital forces, by holy sympathies and fellowships. We have spiritual fathers among us, whom we love in the Lord, and spiritual children whose welfare is our deepest concern, and brethren and sisters to whom we have been helpful, or who have been helpful to us, whom we cannot but commune with in heart. As a common desire to defend their country welds all the regiments of an army into one, so the common desire to save souls makes all true believers akin to each other.

But this passion is most of all for *the good of the individual possessing it*. I will not try this morning to sum up in the short time allotted to me the immense benefits which come to a man through his labouring for the conversion of others, but I will venture this assertion, that no man or woman in the church of God is in a healthy state if he or she be not labouring to save some. Those who are laid aside by suffering are taking their part in the economy of the household of Christ, but with that exception, he that doth not work neither shall he eat, he that doth not water others is not watered himself, and he who cares not for the souls of others may well stand in jeopardy about his own.

To long for the conversion of others makes us Godlike. Do we desire man's welfare? God does so. Would we fain snatch them from the burning? God is daily performing this deed of grace. Can we say that we have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth? Jehovah has declared the like with an oath. Do we weep over sinners? Did not Jehovah's Son weep over them? Do we lay out ourselves for their conversion? Did he not die that they might live? Ye are made Godlike when this passion glows within your spirit.

This is a vent for your love to God as well as your love to men. Loving the Creator, we pity his fallen creatures, and feel a benevolent

love towards the work of his hands. If we love God, we feel as he does, that judgment is his strange work, and we cannot bear that those whom he has created should be cast away for ever. Loving God makes us sorrow that all men do not love him too. It frets us that the world lieth in the wicked one, at enmity to its own Creator, at war with him who alone can bless it. O beloved, you do not love the Lord at all unless you love the souls of others.

Trying to bring others to Christ does us good by renewing in us our old feelings, and reviving our first love. When I see an inquirer penitent for sin, I recollect the time when I felt as he is feeling; and when I hear the seeker for the first time say, "I do believe in Jesus," I recollect the birthday of my own soul, when the bells of my heart rang out their merriest peals, because Jesus Christ was come to dwell within me. Soul-winning keeps the heart lively, and preserves our warm youth to us; it is a mighty refresher to decaying love.

If you feel the chill of scepticism stealing over you, and begin to doubt the gospel's power, go to work among the poor and ignorant, or comfort souls in distress, and when you see the brightness of their countenances as they obtain joy and peace in believing, your scepticism will fly like chaff before the wind. You must believe in the cause when you see the result; you cannot help believing when the evidence is before your eyes. Work for Jesus keeps us strong in faith, and intense in love to him.

Does not this holy instinct draw forth all the faculties of a man? One strong passion will frequently bring the whole man into play, like a skilful minstrel whose hand brings music from every chord. If we love others, we shall, like Paul, become wise to attract them, wise to persuade them, wise to convince them, wise to encourage them; we shall learn the use of means which had lain rusted by, and discover in ourselves talents which else had been hidden in the ground if the strong desire to save men had not cleared away the soil.

And I will add here that love to souls will in the end bring to every one who follows it up the highest joy beneath the stars. What is that? It is the joy of knowing that you have been made the spiritual parent of others. I have tasted of this stream full often, and it is heaven below. The joy of being saved one's self has a measure of selfishness about it, but to know that your fellow-men are saved by your efforts brings a joy pure, disinterested, and heavenly, of which we may drink the deepest draughts without injury to our spirits. Yield yourselves, brethren, to the divine appetite for doing good, be possessed with it, and eaten up by it, and the best results must follow. Be this henceforward your aim, "That I may by all means save some."

II. HOW DOES THIS PASSION EXERCISE ITSELF? Differently in different persons, and at different periods. At first it shows itself by *tender anxiety*. The moment a man is saved he begins to be anxious about his wife, his child, or his dearest relative, and that anxiety leads him at once to pray for them. As soon as the newly opened eye has enjoyed the sweet light of the Sun of Righteousness it looks lovingly round on those who were its companions in darkness, and then gazes up into heaven with a tearful prayer that they also may receive their sight. Hungry ones while they are eating the first mouthful at the

banquet of free grace groan within themselves and say, "Oh, that my poor, starving children could be here to feed on the Saviour's love with me." Compassion is natural to the new-born nature; as common humanity makes us pity the suffering, so renewed humanity makes us pity the sinful. This, I say, happens at the very dawn of the new life. Further on in the heavenly pilgrimage this passion manifests itself in the *intense joy* exhibited when news reaches us of the conversion of others. I have often seen at church meetings, and missionary meetings, a hearty and holy joy spread throughout an audience when some new convert, or returned missionary, or successful minister, has given details of the wonders of saving grace. Many a poor girl who could do but little for the Saviour has, nevertheless, shown what she would have done if she could, by the tears of joy which have streamed down her cheeks when she has heard that sinners have been led to Jesus. This is one of the ways in which those who can personally do little can share in the joy of the most useful, yea, can have fellowship with Jesus himself.

The hallowed instinct of soul-winning also shows itself in *private efforts, sacrifices, prayers, and agonies* for the spread of the gospel. Well do I remember when I first knew the Lord how restless I felt till I could do something for others. I did not know that I could speak to an assembly, and I was very timid as to conversing upon religious subjects, and therefore I wrote little notes to different persons setting forth the way of salvation, and I dropped these written letters with printed tracts into the post, or slipped them under the doors of houses, or dropped them into areas, praying that those who read them might be aroused as to their sins, and moved to flee from the wrath to come. My heart would have burst if it could not have found some vent. I wish that all professors kept up their first zeal, and were diligent in doing little things as well as greater things for Jesus, for often the lesser agencies turn out to be as effectual as those which operate upon a larger area. I hope that all of you young people who have been lately added to the church are trying some mode of doing good, suitable for your capacity and position, that by all means you may save some. A word may often bless those whom a sermon fails to reach, and a personal letter may do far more than a printed book.

As we grow older, and are more qualified, we shall take our share in the more *public agencies* of the church. We shall speak for Jesus before the few who meet at the cottage prayer-meeting, we shall pray with as well as for our families, or we shall enlist in the Sabbath-school, or take a tract district. Ultimately the Lord may call us to plead his cause before hundreds or thousands, and so beginning with littles our latter end shall greatly increase.

There is one point in which zeal for the salvation of others will show itself in all who possess it, namely, in *adapting ourselves to the condition and capacity of others for their good*. Notice this in Paul. He became all things to all men, if by any means he might save some. He became a Jew to the Jews. When he met with them he did not rail at their ceremonies, but endeavoured to bring out their spiritual meaning. He did not preach against Judaism, but showed them Jesus as the fulfiller of its types. When he met with a heathen he did not

revile the gods, but taught him the true God and salvation by his Son. He did not carry about with him one sermon for all places, but adapted his speech to his audience. What a very wonderful address that was which Paul delivered to the council of philosophers upon Mars' Hill. It is most courteous throughout, and it is a pity that our translation somewhat destroys that quality, for it is eminently conspicuous in the original. The apostle began by saying, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that ye are on all points very God-fearing." He did not say, "Too superstitious," as our version has it, that would have needlessly provoked them at the outset. He went on to say, "For as I passed through the city and observed your sacred things, I found an altar bearing the inscription, 'To an unknown God.' What, therefore, ye worship without knowing it, that I announce unto you." He did not say, "Whom ye ignorantly worship." He was far too prudent to use such an expression. They were a collection of thoughtful men, of cultured minds, and he aimed at winning them by courteously declaring to them the gospel. It was most adroit on his part to refer to that inscription upon the altar, and equally so to quote from one of their own poets. If he had been addressing Jews, he would neither have quoted from a Greek poet nor referred to a heathen altar: his intense love for his hearers taught him to merge his own peculiarities in order to secure their attention. In the same manner we also sink ourselves, and instead of demanding that others submit to us, we cheerfully submit to them in all unessential matters, that we may gain their favourable consideration of the claims of Jesus. Mark you, there was never a man more stern for principle than Paul; in things where it was necessary to take his stand he was firm as a rock, but in merely personal and external matters he was the servant of all. Adaptation was his *forte*. Beloved, if you have to talk to children, be children, and do not expect them to be men. Think their thoughts, feel their feelings, and put truth into their words. You will never get at their hearts till your heart is in sympathy with their childhood. If you have to comfort the aged, enter also into their infirmities, and do not speak to them as if they were still in the full vigour of life. Study persons of all ages, and be as they are, that they may be led to be believers, as you are. Are you called to labour among the educated? Then choose out excellent words, and present them apples of gold in baskets of silver. Do you work among the illiterate? Let your words be as goads; speak their mother tongue, use great plainness of speech, so that you may be understood, for what avails to speak to them in an unknown tongue? Are you cast among people with strange prejudices? Do not unnecessarily jar with them, but take them as you find them. Are you seeking the conversion of a person of slender understanding? Do not inflict upon him the deeper mysteries, but show him the plain man's pathway to heaven in words which he who runs may read. Are you talking with a friend who is of a sorrowful spirit? Tell him of your own depressions, enter into his griefs, and so raise him as you were raised. Like the good Samaritan, go where the wounded man lies, and do not expect him to come to you. A real passion for winning souls reveals the many sides of our manhood, and uses each one as a reflector of the divine light of truth. There is a

door to each man's heart, and we have to find it, and enter it with the right key, which is to be found somewhere or other in the word of God. All men are not to be reached in the same way, or by the same arguments, and as we are by all means to save some, we must be wise to win souls, wise with wisdom from above. We desire to see them conquered for Christ, but no warrior uses always the same strategy; there is for one open assault, for another a siege, for a third an ambush, for a fourth a long campaign. On the sea there are great rams which run down the enemy, torpedoes under water, gunboats, and steam frigates: one ship is broken up by a single blow, another needs a broadside, a third must have a shot between wind and water, a fourth must be driven on shore; even thus must we adapt ourselves, and use the sacred force entrusted to us with grave consideration and solemn judgment, looking ever to the Lord for guidance and for power. All the real power is in the Lord's hands, and we must put ourselves fully at the disposal of the divine Worker, that he may work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure; so shall we by all means save some.

III. WHY IS NOT THIS PASSION MORE LARGELY DEVELOPED AMONG CHRISTIANS? The preacher needs not answer that question, each of his hearers may do that for himself. Why is it that we do not yearn more over the perishing souls of men? Is it not that we have but very little grace? We are dwarfish Christians, with little faith, little love, little care for the glory of God, and therefore with little concern for perishing sinners. We are spiritually naked, and poor, and miserable, when we might be rich and increased in goods if we had but more faith. That is the secret of the matter, and is the fountain of all the mischief, but if we must come to particulars, do you not think that men are careless about the souls of others because they have fallen into *one-sided views of gospel doctrines*, and have turned the doctrines of grace into a couch for idleness to rest upon? "God will save his own," say they. Yes, but his own do not talk in that fashion; they are not like Cain, who said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Unquestionably the Lord will see that his own elect are called in due season, but he will do this by the preaching or teaching of the word. Predestination is not a legitimate reason for inaction; men do not consider it so in other matters, why then in religion? Except the Lord prospers us in business all our efforts are vain, and yet we do not say, "I shall have as many pounds in my pocket as God intends I shall have, and therefore I need not work or trade." No, men save their fatalism to play the fool with in spiritual things: in all other things they are not such idiots as to suffer predestination to paralyse their minds, but here, since idleness wants an excuse for itself, they dare to abuse this sacred truth to stultify their consciences.

In some professors downright *worldliness* prevents their seeking the conversion of others. They are too fond of gain to care for saving souls, too busy about their farms to sow the seed of the kingdom, too much occupied with their shops to hold up the cross before the sinner's eye, too full of care to care for the salvation of the lost. Covetousness eats up the very soul of many. They have far more business than they can manage, without injury to their spiritual health, and yet they are eager after more. Prayer-meetings are neglected, the class in the

school is given up, efforts for the poor and ignorant are never made, and all because they are so taken up with the world and its cares. This age is peculiarly tempted in that direction, and it needs strong piety to be able to love the souls of men practically.

With some I fear that the cause of indifference is *want of faith*. They do not believe that God will bless their efforts, and therefore they make none. They have a vivid recollection of far-gone times when they tried to be useful and failed, and instead of past failure being made a reason for double exertion in the present, to make up for lost time, they have given up labour for the Lord as a bad case, and do not attempt anything more. It is to be feared that with many church-members the reason of the absence of this passion is that they love ease, and are worm-eaten with *indolence*. They say, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry; why trouble about others?" "Send the multitude away," said the disciples. They did not want to be worried with them. True, the people were very hungry and weary, and it was a painful thing to see them fainting; but it was easier to forget their needs than to relieve them. London is perishing, millions are dying in their sins, the world still lieth in the wicked one, and sloth calls forgetfulness to her aid to ignore the whole matter. Such people do not want to be made uncomfortable, neither do they wish to spend and be spent for the glory of Christ.

The secret of all is that the great majority of Christians are *out of sympathy with God*, and out of communion with Christ. Is not this an evil? O eyes that never wept over dying men, do ye expect to see the King in his beauty? O hearts that never throbbed with anxiety for those that are going down to the pit, do ye hope to leap for joy at the Master's coming? O lips that never speak for Jesus, how will ye answer to the searching questions of the last great day? I do beseech you, Christian people, if you have grown indifferent to the conversion of those around you, search out the secret reason, find what is the worm at the root of your piety, and in the name of Christ seek to be delivered therefrom.

IV. HOW CAN THIS PASSION BE MORE FULLY AROUSED? It can be aroused only, first, by our *obtaining a higher life*. The better man shall do the better deed; the stronger in grace the stronger to save some. I do not believe in a man's trying to pump himself up beyond his level. The man must be up, and then all that comes out of the man will have risen. If love to God glows in your soul, it must show itself in your concern for others. Make the tree good and the fruit will be good. It will not do for you to begin a more earnest career by stimulating yourself to a hectic zeal which will come and go like the flush on the consumptive's cheek; the life within must be permanently strengthened, and then the pulsings of the heart, and the motion of the whole man will be more vigorous. More grace is our greatest need.

This being granted, it will greatly help us to care for the conversion of sinners if we are *fully cognisant of their misery and degradation*. How differently one feels after seeing with your own eyes the poverty, filth, and vice of this city. I wish some of you respectable people, who have never seen any part of London except the broad thoroughfares, would take a stroll down the courts which open into the

narrow side streets. I would like you to go down courts such as Queen Victoria never saw, and alleys far from green. Ladies, you may leave some of that finery at home; and gentlemen, you may put away your pocket-handkerchiefs and your purses, unless you would like to empty them out among the wretched beings you will meet. There are sights to be seen close to our own homes which might well make our hearts bleed and harrow up our spirits. When you have seen them you will begin to feel aright towards the sinful. We sit at home comfortably at our fires in the winter time and think the weather is not so very cold, but if we go out and see the poor shivering in their rags, or find them cowering over their empty grates, we begin to think that cold is a greater evil than we dreamed: we come here to this place of worship, and while we are listening to the Word we forget the destitution of those who hear it not. Why, at this very moment around the doors of the gin-palaces and public-houses of London there are thousands standing waiting till the blessed hour of one, when they can obtain the cheering draught which their souls thirst after. The assemblies now tarrying for the god Bacchus can be counted by thousands. What have these men been doing with the Sabbath hours up till now? Reading the Sunday newspaper, lying in bed, or loafing about their little gardens in their shirt sleeves. That is the occupation of hundreds of thousands this day all around us and at our doors; have we done our best to bring them to the house of prayer? Hundreds of thousands hard by have never heard the gospel in their lives, and never think of entering places where it is preached. Of course, if they had lived in Calcutta we should have thought about them; living in London close to us shall we neglect them? One of the best things that could be done for us all would be to go round for a week with a city missionary to houses in the worst parts of the city, that we might see for ourselves what is to be seen; then would sin and poverty become palpable, and stand out in grim reality. Your fellow-countrymen, men born of women, who are of the same flesh and blood as yourselves, are living in daily neglect of your dear Saviour, living in jeopardy of their immortal souls; if you did but realise this it would quicken you by all means to save some.

Brethren, the strongest argument I have ever seen for the doctrine of the eternity of future punishment is an argument which is often used against it. They say, "If the eternity of future punishment be true, we wonder that believers in it can rest in their beds, or eat their meals, for the truth is so horrible that it ought to stir them to incessant efforts to deliver others from going into this boundless misery." It is true, and spoken as by a prophet, and that is one reason why I believe the doctrine, because it has a tendency, if anything has, to move us to compassion and rouse us to action. If the advocate of other views is prepared to teach me a doctrine which will make me think more lightly of sin, and make me feel more easy about the damnation of my fellow-men, I do not want his doctrine, for I am too careless now, and have a dread of being more so. If with the most terrible argument for incessant sorrow for the ruin of the souls of my hearers, I cannot be as tender as I would, what should I be if I could lay the flattering unction to my soul that after all it was of smaller consequence than I had

thought whether they were damned or saved? Ah, dear friends, can you bear to think of it, that all around you there are men and women who will, in a few years, suffer the terrible wrath of God, and be banished for ever from his presence? If you could but realise hell and its horrors, you must be stirred by all means to save some.

Many other things might move us, but certainly this last ought to do it. A sense of *our own solemn obligations* to the grace of God should arouse all our energies. If we are what we profess to be, we are saved men, redeemed by the heart's blood of the Son of God: do we not owe something to Christ for this? Shall we be easy till we have found many jewels for his crown? Can we be content while so many myriads are ignorant of him, or opposed to him? If ye love him, what will ye do for him? Show him a proof of your love, and the best proof you can give is your own personal holiness and persevering effort to gather in his redeemed. Brother, sister, do something for Jesus. Do not talk about it: do it. Words are leaves; actions are fruits. Do something for Jesus; do something for Jesus to-day! Ere the sun goes down think of some one action which may tend to the conversion of some one person, and do it with your might; let the object of the effort be your child, your servant, your brother, your friend—but do make the effort to-day. Having done it to-day, do it to-morrow, and every day; and doing it in one way, do it another way; and doing it in one state of heart, do it in another. Let your joy enchant, let your sorrow arouse, let your hope attract; let your changeful moods help you to attack sinners from different quarters, as your varying circumstances bring you into contact with differing persons. Be always awake. Turn yourself about like a gun on a swivel to reach persons who are found in any direction, so that some may fall wounded by the gospel's power. By all means save some: God grant it may be so. And, oh, that some might be saved this morning by simply believing in Christ Jesus, for that is the way of salvation. Jesus puts away sin wherever there is a simple trust in him; may seekers exercise that trust now, and live for ever. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Isaiah vi.; 1 Corinthians ix.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—176, 353, 358.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LORD CHIDING HIS PEOPLE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 3RD, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever."—Psalm ciii. 9.

THIS verse has reference only to the children of God. The psalm is for them, they alone can sing it, and this statement is concerning them only, for this reason, that from every true child of God the wrath of the great judge of all the earth is removed. Our sins were laid upon Jesus Christ, and he bore them for us; the penalty due to us on account of them, or its equivalent, has been endured by Jesus Christ our substitute, and therefore, as before the throne of God, there is no accusation against a believer, and the justice of God has no anger towards him. "Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me," is the proper language of every justified man.

But let it never be forgotten that in pursuance of his gracious plan, God, who has blotted out our offences as rebellious subjects, has now placed us in a new relationship, for, by adoption and the new birth, we have become his children and he is our father; and though he neither can nor will ever summon us before the bar of his jurisdiction, either to charge us with sin or condemn us for it, inasmuch as Jesus Christ has put that sin away, yet, as our Father, he exercises discipline amongst his family, and we, as his children, are both chidden and chastened for our faults. The sword of justice no longer threatens us, but the rod of parental correction is still in use. The judge no longer condemns, but the Father chides; "For what son is he whom his father chasteneth not." Remember, then, that we are not about to speak of believers under the law, or the anger arising out of the breach thereof: from all the mire of that slough of legality we are quite clean, but we are about to treat of believers as the adopted, twice-born children of God, and of the rule of the Lord's household, and the chiding and chastisement which are necessary to it.

The text seems to me to say two things : first, ~~he will chide~~, *secondly, he will not always chide*, neither will he keep his anger for ever.

I. The text very plainly says to us who choose to hear it, **HE WILL CHIDE**. It is implied that he will be angry, otherwise it were not needful to say that "He will not keep his anger for ever."

Why will he chide? There are many answers, but we can mention a few only.

He will chide his own dearly beloved children, first, because if he did not do so it would seem like winking at sin. Eli did not restrain his sons or chasten them as he should have done, and therefore judgments fell upon his house. God is not foolishly gentle like that aged priest, he will sorely smite his children if they follow iniquity. David had never displeased Adonijah at any time in saying, "Why hast thou done so?" and therefore on his death-bed the old man heard the news that his much-indulged son was seeking to snatch the crown from Solomon, his appointed heir. God is no indulgent David, he does not spare his children the chidings due to their sins. "The Lord thy God is a jealous God." In his people sin is sin, and even yet more heinous than in those who are outside of the family, seeing that they sin against greater light and greater love. Sin is in the elect of God exceeding sinful, the Lord regards it as an intolerable evil, which his soul hateth, which must be cleansed as by burning, for he will bring his people through the fire and refine them as silver is refined. Has he not said of his chosen, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities"? A man may suffer a stranger's child to do many wrong things without laying his hand upon him, but he makes his own child to smart if he dares to disobey.

God chastens and chides his children, next, because if he did not so, others of the family would follow their ill example. If I knew a man who lived in sin, and yet enjoyed the light of God's countenance, should I not naturally conclude that I also may live as he does, and yet walk in the light as God is in the light? If we had heard of David's sin with Bathsheba, and had never read of his horror of soul, his broken bones and bleeding heart, should we not have inferred that we also might fall into the like filthiness, and find it a very small matter to return into the way of righteousness again? Every father among you knows that he has often to deal with his child's ill doing, not only for its own sake but for the sake of his younger children; for if the fault were overlooked they might come to do the same. Sometimes a frown which might have been spared the individual, considered by himself, must be put upon the parent's face for the sake of brothers and sisters, lest they should fall into like fault. Remember that the Lord has a large family, and like a wise father he considers the interests of all, consequently he does not allow sin to go unchidden, lest it breed folly in others.

Moreover, the world outside the regenerated family look on with no friendly eye, and if the erring child of God were never chidden or chastened, then would worldlings say, "What mattereth it that God denounceth sin in us, when he winks at it in his own family?" Should we not say of a minister who preached holiness, but who suffered his

own sons to indulge in vice, "It is a pity that he does not begin at home"? Is it not natural for us to think that those who are in real earnest for piety and holiness will be sure to show it by the way in which they restrain their own children, and conduct the affairs of their own house? If we see that a Christian man's daughters are the gayest of the gay, and the most frivolous of the frivolous, do we not say at once, "What a pity it is that he speaks about evil in others, and yet does not set his own house in order"? It is mentioned as an essential qualification for a pastor that "he ruleth well his own house"; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? Of the deacons also it is said that they must "rule their children and their own houses well:" from which we gather that a man who cannot govern his children can never be anything but a rear-rank soldier of Christ, a poor, feeble Christian at best. Now, shall it ever be said that the great Father of spirits does not enforce discipline in his own house? Will the greatest of all householders suffer it to be whispered throughout the world that he allows his favourites to do as they please, and his darlings to indulge in sin without chiding them? God forbid! It must not be so imagined. What saith the apostle Paul in the Hebrews? "Even our God is a consuming fire." He does not say that God out of Christ is a consuming fire, for God in Christ is *our God*, and in that character he is a consuming fire, burning with infinite jealousy against sin. The terrified hypocrites in Zion, who are spoken of by Isaiah, asked a hard question, but it is one which we must answer:—"Who among us shall dwell with that devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Only he can so dwell who "walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly," "but he shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks, his bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure" (Is. xxxiii. 14—16). It is not possible for the thrice holy Jehovah to act otherwise towards sin than as fire to fuel, hence those who dwell with him must be pure. God must, for the outside world's sake, judge amongst his own people, separating the precious from the vile, and passing even the precious gold through the fire to cleanse it from its dross, thus making his people to be a holy people, separated unto his fear. His fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem; judgment begins at the house of God.

But, beloved, there is another reason which more nearly concerns ourselves. God must chide us when we do ill, for our own sakes, for else the evil would lie festering in us, breeding I know not what of deadly mischief. Often we do not know the sin to be sin till the Lord chides us for it, or we do not perceive the high degree of its sinfulness till we hear his solemn tones rebuking us lovingly but sharply that we may be sound in his fear. This divine chiding lays open the sore which else might have worked inwardly to mortal sickness. Besides, if sin were unchidden one fault would lead to another, and we should go from bad to worse. That gradual decline which saps the bodily constitution of many would happen to our souls, and we should fall by little and little; grey hairs would be upon us here and there, and we should not know it. The Lord reins us up when our steps are almost gone, and gives us a sharp blow such as a skilful driver deals to a stumbling horse, and then we run

more carefully, pick up our feet in the dangerous pathway, and so hold on and hold out to the end. It is necessary, beloved, and for our good, that we should bear his chidings, because else sin would before long pierce us through with many sorrows. I am never afraid for my brethren who have many troubles, but I often tremble for those whose career is prosperous. To be emptied from vessel to vessel with trouble is often the best thing which can befall us, but to stand at ease till the lees subside, and yet are there, is the greatest danger of Christians in these days. The dregs of sin fall to the bottom out of sight, because we are not agitated by affliction, and then we get the notion that we are wholly refined and clear from sinfulness, when it is only because we are not stirred that our impurities do not rise to the surface. Brethren, it is good sometimes to be stirred up with a temptation that you may see what a hell there is in the depravity of your nature, and what a fiend you are apart from the grace of God : this humbles you, drives you to prayer, and makes you cry out for real purity, and so is a blessed thing. But to have ease and freedom from toil, never to have your temper tried, never to have your patience exercised, to have a long period of prosperity, is often to breed in you an estimate of yourself which is totally false. You are no better than other men, but you happen not to be so much tempted as other men, and so you become self-conceited, which is one of the most grievous of calamities. Now, the Lord can see the residuum which we do not see, he knows what lees are at the bottom of the vessel, and, therefore, he chides us, tells us of our secret faults, and makes our faces to be suffused with blushes, though just before we were full of self-exultation.

Remember, also, that while sin would lie in us and fester, and we should also grow self-conceited, we may be sure that we should never attain any high position in grace if it were not for the chidings of the Lord. His rebukes throw us on our face before the cross, and we are then nearer heaven than at any other time. Beloved, if we become satisfied with what we are we shall cease to struggle after anything better, and become stunted professors. There is grave cause in every one of us for dissatisfaction with our condition, from one point of view or another, and, therefore, it is a thousand mercies that the divine reproofs for our weakness of faith, for the coldness of our love, for the distance of our walk with God, or for our want of prayerfulness, cause us to bestir ourselves and press forward and upward after more excellent things. The Lord's corrections are the thorns in our nest which make us soar towards heaven ; his chidings show us our emptiness, and lead us to apply to the fulness which is prepared for us.

I cannot, however, stop to show you many more of the wise, tender, fatherly, gracious reasons why the Lord chides his people ; but I will answer another question. *How does he do it ?* I answer, sometimes he rebukes his people by the sin itself. They sow it and he lets them reap it, and there is no more fitting retribution than for the backslider in heart to be filled with his own ways. If you sow wild oats they will make bitter cakes when they are reaped and ground, and you are made to eat them. The Lord treats us as Aaron treated Israel ; he took their golden calf and stamped it to powder, strawed it on the water, and made them drink thereof. Very sharp and burning is the decoction made from our

darling sins. Bitterer than gall is the wine which flows from the grapes of transgression. Sin's result is its punishment. Abraham's unbelief chastened itself when he found his wife taken by the Philistine king. A worse case is that of Lot, he did not keep the separated path as he ought to have done, but chose to dwell with the men of Sodom, and when he saw all his property destroyed by the flames which fell from heaven, when his sons-in-law perished, and his wife was turned into a pillar of salt, he must have seen in his sorrows the very image of his sins. Who brought this upon thee, Lot? Who made thee what thou now art? What but thy worldliness? and who but thyself, in thy greedy choice of the well watered plain of Sodom, and thy forsaking of the pilgrim walk with God? Child of eternal love, thy God will gather twigs for his rod out of thine own garden; like Gideon he will chastise thee with thorns and briers; and those sharp teachers he will gather from the neglected corner of the field which thou shouldst have cultivated for thy Lord.

Frequently he chastens his people by his providence. Chastisements come to us through sickness of body, and depression of spirit, losses in business or failures of enterprise, trouble in the family or attacks from the outside world; but here we must be careful to discriminate, for all trials are not chastisements, many are sent as tests of integrity, or illustrations of faith; some are sent to afford us opportunities of winning crowns for Christ and honour for his grace. In fact, trials may be regarded very often as great favours and special privileges. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth," and "Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." You must not judge because you are afflicted that therefore you have been more sinful than others, for it may be you are more beloved. Tribulation is often a gracious reward for faithfulness, affording as it does an opportunity for the exercise of yet higher virtue. Yet many troubles are manifestly chastisements. When Rebekah saw her darling son driven away from his father's house, was not that a chastisement for her teaching him falsehood? When afterwards Jacob found himself deceived by Laban, what was that but a chastisement for the deceit which he had practised against his brother Esau? God's providence is disciplinary towards his own household: David's sin was followed by a pestilence, Hezekiah's proud display of his riches to the Babylonian ambassadors brought on the captivity. Asa's transgression caused the rest of his life to be troubled with wars. A happy life can be changed into one of care and affliction by careless living, for God will order all events for the correction of his rebellious child.

But the Lord as often chides his people by the withdrawal of privilege. Full assurance is one of the first blessings taken from those who wander; faith burns dimly, and those who could once read their title clear, now spell it out with many questionings by a smoking lamp, whose light is but a glimmer. They formerly could say, "I know;" now they can barely cry, "I hope." Their faith is weak because it does not live now in the same atmosphere, since the manifested love of God has ceased to shine upon them. The Lord also denies his blessing to the means of grace, and they become wells without water, and clouds without rain. The sermon is not sweet as it used to be, and even the

Bible is not so comforting as aforetime. The joyous assemblies are now sorrowful, the feasts are turned to fasts, the Bethels to Bochim, the hymns to howlings. The wail of the mourner will be, "O that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about me." Private prayer soon becomes a weariness, and all the exercises of secret devotion are carried on as matters of duty rather than as sources of enjoyment. The Father also chides his children by taking from them their fellowship with himself. They dare no longer sing, "My beloved is mine, and I am his," but their cry is, "Whither is my beloved gone, that I may seek him?" At the Lord's table the emblems are no longer gates of pearl to admit to the secret chambers of the King. The beloved is gone, and the sun is eclipsed. Now they are in the dark, though once they basked in the sunlight. Some here know all about this, and they will tell you that there is no worse chastening than to be left of God, and deprived of his present smile.

Then there will happen to you a great withdrawal of power in prayer. You used to ask and have, but now you are made to wait, and knock long and loud before the gate opens to you. Once you were such a favourite with the King that when you had his ear, you spoke to him for your child, and that child's soul was given you; you sought favours, and they came into your bosom at once; you told the Well-beloved your daily troubles with sweet familiarity, and they were all relieved at once; whatsoever you asked in prayer, you received, because you kept his commandments. But now you have walked contrary to him, and he walks contrary to you; the heavens are as brass above you, and your prayer comes back upon you unanswered. Thus doth the Lord chide you.

It happens also that the erring Christian's influence over others fades away. "When a man's ways please the Lord he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him;" but when he gets out of step with God then his enemies take licence to rage. Look at David; did not the Lord let loose upon him that cursing Shimei, and open the mouth of Sheba, the son of Bichri, because he had sinned? As for Solomon, the great king, what cause had he to be afraid of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, or Hadad the Edomite, or Rezon of Damascus, until the day when he had cause to be afraid of his offended God? The lions are chained for Daniel, "the man greatly beloved;" but they break loose upon the man who follows afar off, and roar upon him till he denies his Master.

At times the Lord will chasten his servants by taking away all their success in service. They preached, and souls were saved; but now they preach, and there are no conversions. They went to the Sabbath-school class, and the children's hearts were melted while they taught; it is not so now. Barrenness has fallen upon all their fields, their land is sown with salt, their vine forgets her fruit, for the Lord has said, "Inasmuch as you have left me, and sinned against me, I also will leave you to your devices till you mourn and repent and turn unto me." May my Lord never thus chide me, I would choose any plague rather than that of barrenness.

Moreover, our heavenly Father chides by his Holy Spirit. Many of

we know what it is for the Spirit of God to speak softly in our hearts and tell us we have done wrong the very moment we have transgressed, and happy is that man who bows before that voice, for he will thus escape the rod, since the Lord never comes to blows when words will suffice. The Spirit of God often sends home the reproofs of Scripture to our hearts; while we are reading the word we feel that it searches us and rebukes us. So also the Lord will employ his ministers to chide us. Little is that ministry worth which never chides you. If God never uses his minister as a rod, depend upon it he will never use him as a pot of manna, for the rod of Aaron and the pot of manna always go together, and he who is God's true servant will be both to your soul. The Lord will also chide you through your own conscience, causing you to judge and condemn yourself. The Spirit of God will quicken your understanding, and then it will be said of you as of David, "David's heart smote him." It is hard hitting when the heart smites, for it comes to such close quarters, but blessed is that man who can thus be corrected: it is a sad sign when conscience is too dead to be of any service in this direction.

I believe our heavenly Father at times chides his people through church discipline. I do not mean the discipline carried on by us through minister, deacons, and the church itself, but I refer to that solemn church discipline which goes on in the churches, and is often unobserved. Paul said of the disorders in the Corinthian church, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. But if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." Now, there is no reason to believe that these visitations of the Lord upon the churches have ceased, indeed, I am persuaded they have not. I have seen those who have walked inconsistently in this place die one after another; when their inconsistencies have not been such as I could touch, but such as have grieved the children of God, the Lord has himself executed discipline. Many cases which I shall never relate are written down in the tablets of my memory with this verdict, "Removed by the discipline of God." I have seen others blighted in fortune, chastened in body, and especially depressed in spirit as the result of grieving the Spirit of God in the church. Church sins, such as injure peace and unity, check zeal and enterprise, or hinder prayer, or grieve holy men, are surely visited with stripes. There is no need for us to root up the tares, for the Spirit of God does it by his own processes. That same spirit that was in Peter and smote Ananias and Sapphira is still in the church, not destroying souls, but taking away life or health as a solemn discipline upon grave offences beyond the reach of human jurisdiction. I do not say that it is so in all churches, for some churches are barely churches of Christ at all; but when a church lives in the light, and when the Lord blesses that church, and the Spirit of God is there, discipline from God will be decisive, for the Lord is very jealous for his name in such places. Depend upon it, one of the most awful conditions a man can hold, while it is also one of the most blessed, is to be in membership with a church that is much loved and smiled upon by God, for there is a searching wind of disci-

pline sweeping through it continually of a more solemn kind than I shall care further to describe just now.

Now let us ask, *when does God chide?* I will answer very briefly, that he does not chide for every sin. His word chides for every sin, but I mean that the Lord does not for every fault actually chasten us in the sense here intended. He is angry when a sin has not been mourned over and repented of; when it is known to be sin and yet committed again; when it threatens to become chronic, so that the man will continue in it, and it will become habitual. He is sure to chide when a sin has especial flagrancy about it; when it indulges the grosser lusts, or some utterly contemptible passion, or is associated with pride and presumption. Surely also will he rebuke when the offence follows upon high privileges. If you lie in God's bosom you must watch that you do not offend; a common subject may do without punishment that which the king's favourite must not even think of. We will take from strangers remarks which would wound us terribly if they came from our lover and friend. If you be amongst the king's courtiers he will watch your walk with a jealous eye. Chiding is sure to come when the offender is not in circumstances which would suggest an excuse for his fault, such as a sudden temptation, or a fierce trial. Anything like a deliberate act of sin is certain to bring down the Father's anger. When the poor man in his extremity acts as he should not to gain bread for his babes, God will never view his offence in the same light as the greed of the man of wealth. Is not that an incidental lesson of Nathan's parable in which the rich man's many flocks aggravate his robbery of the poor man's ewe lamb? Brethren, the sin which in me may be very grievous might be comparatively overlooked in you; and the sin which in you is pestilent before high heaven might be far less grievous in another brother, whose circumstances are less favourable than yours, whose temptations are stronger and whose natural temperament, perhaps, may have a weakness in that direction. Anyhow the Lord does chasten his people, and displays both wisdom and love in so doing.

II. We have been gazing at the black cloud, now let us watch the silver lining. Here is the text itself in its sweetness, "**HE WILL NOT ALWAYS CHIDE.**" What does that mean?

It means that he will not chide for every fault; of course, as I have already said, his word chides even a sinful thought in his people, but the Lord does not fall to blows about it, does not grow angry so that we feel his anger for every fault of his servants, but only for some, else he would be chiding every hour.

It means, too, that he does not chide long. Oh, how often does he just chide for a moment, and then he has done, like a mother who speaks an angry word to her child, and kisses it the next minute.

"He will not always chide,
And when his strokes are felt,
His strokes are fewer than our crimes,
And lighter than our guilt."

It means, again, that he does not hold any grudge; that is the real meaning of the second clause. The words, "*his anger,*" are in italics,

they are not in the Hebrew, they are supplied by our translators to complete the sense. It means just this, "neither will he keep a grudge against us for ever." Many will say, "I forgive you," but you know very well what sort of forgiveness it is; they pardon you because they cannot help themselves, and they forgive you until the first opportunity comes of showing their spite. Not so with God, he has no grudge against his children, he smites them, and has done with it. Whenever God uses a rod to his children, he always burns it as soon as ever he has done with it; he does not put it up by the looking-glass as I have seen it in some families, but he destroys it, for he hates the sight of it. Thus he used Sennacherib as a rod, but he broke him in pieces. He used Babylon for the same purpose, and then blotted it out of existence; he employed Assyria also but he destroyed her power. The rod reminds him of his children's cries, and he cannot endure it.

Especially the text means that there is no eternal wrath for a child of God. He may be angry with me, but my soul in her deepest agony clutches at this thought, "He will not *always* chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever." Anger for ever is for the ungodly. Oh, you unconverted ones, he will keep his anger for ever against you. So long as God's word is to be understood as it stands we shall believe that as surely as his love is everlasting so is his anger against the impenitent eternal. He will keep his anger for ever against you, but not against believers. Blessed be his name, when the rod makes the bluest wales we may still rejoice that he will not slay us, "neither will he keep his anger for ever." I may lie tossing on the bed of pain, but I shall never make my bed in hell; I may be brought to poverty, but not to perdition; I may suffer loss, but I shall not myself be lost eternally. What a comfort is this?

The positive meaning of the text is that the Lord will soon leave off chiding; and *when will he leave off chiding?* Beloved, he will refrain from chastening when we begin repenting; when we come to tears, then he will cease from rebukes. He wants to make us see the sin and mourn it, and then will he cease to see it and forgive it. He will chide till we come to Jesus Christ as we came at first; but when he brings us to our knees with "God be merciful to me a sinner," he will no more send us away unheard than he sent the publican away unblest. Go, poor prodigal, and weep thy confession into thy Father's bosom, and he will not make mention of chiding, for he forgiveth graciously and upbraideth not. He will chide us till we forsake our sin. The rod and our backs will never part till our hearts and sin are separated. When we put an end to sin there shall be an end to chastening.

Often the Lord will not refrain from chiding till the results of the sin as well as the sin itself shall have been removed: he will even chasten us till our bad example shall have been in a measure counteracted by our sorrows. For instance, David's foul sin would have done great mischief to the church, but David's bitter repentance has become a cure for that evil. When Christian people are able to see that you have to suffer and sorrow because of your wrong-doing, then as far as they are concerned God's reason for chiding you will have ended, and he will turn to you in infinite mercy.

Do you now inquire of me, *Why is it that God will not always chide his people?* Blessed be God, there are many reasons for it. One is because he does not mean to confound chastisement with punishment. The law is angry for ever, but the Gospel is full of pity. God would not have his children treated as if they were slaves, they have not come to Sinai, but to Zion. Moreover, if the Lord did always chide, our spirits would fail before him, for we should be crushed. When he rebukes our beauty fades away like the moth, and if he continued to do so we should die. It is always a sad thing when a parent crushes a child's spirit, as is sometimes done, and the child is made obedient and stupid too; God will not thus injure his children, and therefore he will not always chide. To chide too much might lead to other sins, for if the sin be love of pleasure, we might be chidden into despondency and unbelief and despair, and I know not what; the great Father stays his hand, lest in driving out one devil he should drive ten in, as some parents do. He will not always chide, lest his enemies should exult over his people, for they are always ready to say, "Alas, so we would have it." The wicked world is glad to exult over a chastened saint, but we can say, "Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for the Lord will not always chide." He has said, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord my Redeemer."

After all, remember that when God chastens his children he loves them just as much as when he caresses them. There is no change in Jehovah's love, though there may be changes in his ways of showing it. It never *pleases* God to chasten his children, he does not afflict willingly. When he sees his beloved broken down and humble, he is pleased with their humility, but he grieves for their misery. Judgment is his strange work. He delights to see his people rejoice: he is a happy God, and he loves to have a happy people. Now, if he always chastened them, they would be always wretched, and, therefore, he will not always chide, lest the sweet fruits of the Spirit, which are joy and peace, should never be brought forth in their souls. Beloved, are you being chidden this morning? then let me give you this word of good cheer; when you were a sinner, dead in sin, and had no thought of him nor desire towards him, yet he came to you in love. Do you think that now he will reject you? You whom he has bought with blood? You who have lain in his bosom? You who have known in days gone by sweet fellowship with him on the hill Mizar and the Hermonites? Will he now forsake you? Oh no, he will turn again, he will have compassion upon you, for "he will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever."

And now, brethren, learn the lessons of the whole subject.

The first inference is—here is consolation for the house of Israel. The Jews have been chidden, and God's anger has smoked against his chosen; but they will be gathered together one day, and the fulness of the Jews shall be brought to the feet of Jesus. Let Israel write this over her synagogues, and let believing Jews inscribe this upon their door-posts—"He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever." His dear people Israel he has not put away for ever,

for "where is the bill of your mother's divorcement? saith the Lord." He will yet bring the seed of Abraham to himself and comfort them in his bosom.

Let this be a lesson, also, to ministers. We have to chide sometimes by preaching the law and the terrors of the wrath to come, but we must not let a sharp tone rule our ministry. Our preaching must be quick and powerful, but as God does not always chide so neither must we. There is to be the thunder and the lightning, but there must be the soft shower after it: we must not always chide.

This is equally a lesson to all of you. If God will not always chide, then you must not. Have you a child who has done wrong? Chide by all means, but do not always chide. There is the difficulty involved in the example to the rest of the family, but still I pray you forgive, for your Lord says he will not always chide. God is wiser than we are, and if it would be right always to chide God would have done it, but he acts otherwise. What the Lord does is a model for us, let us copy it. If he would always chide us where should we be? But he will not. Therefore I beseech you forgive the wrong, forgive the wrong at once, and take your child to your heart. Mark your disapprobation of the offence, kind Christian parent, but still forgive your child. Be angry and sin not, and you can only be so by not being angry too much or too long.

Here, too, let us say, do not always find fault. Condemn the fault, mistresses, if there is a wrong in the servant, and speak of it very plainly, but do not be always complaining of your servants, or, as people call it, "nagging at them," for if you do they will very soon hate you, and all chance of doing them good will be gone. By perpetual fault-finding you will make them eye-servers or unhappy slaves. Do not always blame, but praise when it is due. Certain people never praise anybody, they think it will puff them up and spoil them. How many times in a year do I receive the following fatherly advice, "I hope your work will last, and I pray that you may be kept humble," and so on. A good lady once told me that she prayed every day for me, that I might not be proud. I replied, "You put me in mind of my own neglect, for I have never prayed that prayer for you, and must begin." "Oh, no," she said, "there is no occasion for that, there is no danger of my being proud." "Then," said I, "I had better begin at once, for you are proud already." These people think a vast deal of themselves if they imagine that a little of their praise would exalt us above measure. I believe that a judicious word of encouragement and commendation is often more useful than censure, and certainly censure has all the more effect when it comes from one who has spoken justly of you on former occasions. Children and servants will not thrive on perpetual chiding, any more than a horse on constant whipping. A very good gentleman had a faithful manservant who came to him one day after ten years' service and said, "Sir, I must leave you." "How is that?" said he, "have I not treated you well?" "I have no fault to find," was the answer. "Have not I paid you enough? Do you want more?" "Oh, no, sir," he said, "but sometimes, do you know, when we have been travelling together, and have roughed it both on sea and land, if you had spoken one kind word to

me I would have stuck to you as long as you lived, but you have never spoken to me except when you gave your orders." Our honest faithful dependants look for encouragement, and they ought to have it; the Holy Spirit and the apostolic writers speak well of good men, and so should we.

The last word of all, concerns God's dealings with us, that is the chief thought of the text, and let us carry it away with us. He is chiding you, dear sister, he is chiding you my brother, but do not think that it will last for ever. "He will not always chide." The sun went down last night, and a little child who had never noticed it before might have cried and said, "Father, father, the sun is gone away! I saw him go down behind the hills, and it is dark, and what shall we do?" "Oh," you said to him, "do not fear, my boy, he will be up again to-morrow." Go you, then, and tell every broken heart that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." The Lord may chide to-day but he will kiss to-morrow. Now the smartings of his rod are terrible, to-morrow the sweetness of his love will be entrancing. Be of good courage, then! Go to your offended Father speedily, and confess the wrong which brought you chastisement; humble yourself in his sight, and he will smile again. Forgive others, and then expect to be forgiven yourself, for verily, verily I say unto you, the time of the opening of the dungeons is come, the night of mourning is almost over, you soon shall rejoice in the Lord.

"Come, let us to the Lord our God
With contrite hearts return;
Our God is gracious, nor will leave
The desolate to mourn.

"His voice commands the tempest forth,
And stills the stormy wave;
And though his arm be strong to smite,
'Tis also strong to save."

Therefore, be of good courage, all ye that hope in the Lord. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm ciii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
103 (Vers. I.), 136 (Vers. I.), 211.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SAVIOUR YOU NEED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 10TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."—Hebrews v. 9.

THE great folly of awakened sinners lies in looking to themselves. When they are convinced that they are lost, when the law condemns them, when they have the sentence of death ringing with its dolorous knell through their consciences, they nevertheless turn to themselves for help. As well might they search for life within the ribs of death, or dig for light in the drear vaults of outer darkness. First, they try what outward reformation can do, and they are amazed when they discover their own impotence; then they turn their eyes towards their feelings, and either they labour after tears and mental tortures till they grow conceitedly miserable, or else they yield to hopelessness, because they find their heart to be as an adamant stone. They frequently fly to ceremonials, and go far in formalism, but find no peace; and as often they turn to the belief of orthodox doctrines, and seek salvation in mere head knowledge of the word, forgetting that Jesus once said, "Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; but ye will not come unto me that ye might have eternal life." In some shape or other, all natural men seek refuge in self, and fly thither again and again and again, though often driven from it. Their so doing is useless and foolish, dishonouring to God and defiling to themselves. If men would but believe the truth, they would know that they can no more save themselves than they can turn evil into good, or hell into heaven! It would be a grand thing done if they could be made to understand that they have abundant power to destroy themselves, but that all their help for salvation lies wholly in Jesus Christ; when they are convinced of this, they will cast themselves upon the Redeemer, and peace and joy would fill their spirits. This is the stern labour which utterly baffles the preacher, it is a work which only the Holy Spirit can accomplish. To wean the sinner from the breasts of self,

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to rescue him from his proud delusions, to make him see that salvation must come from above, as the pure gift of grace—this, though it appears simple enough, requires a miracle of grace.

God the Holy Spirit generally uses as a cure for this foolish looking to self the exhibition of Christ Jesus. Christ supplants self. Looking unto Jesus puts an end to looking to frames and feelings and workings; and I shall now endeavour to preach Jesus Christ, in the fulness of his perfection as a Saviour, that poor sinners may not look for perfection in themselves, nor search for any fitness or strength in themselves, but may flee away to Jesus, in whom everything requisite for their salvation is so richly provided.

I. Five thoughts grow out of the text, and the first is this: beloved seeker after peace, believe in THE UNDOUBTED WILLINGNESS OF JESUS CHRIST TO SAVE. Where do I find this in the text? I find it just below its surface, and here it is. As God, the Lord Jesus is and always was perfect in the most emphatic sense; as man, Christ's character is also perfect from the first, having in it neither deficiency nor excess; but as Mediator, High Priest, and Saviour, he had to undergo a process to make him perfectly qualified; for the text says, "Being *made* perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation." Now, if we find that he was willing to undergo the process which made him completely fit for the office of a Saviour, we may certainly conclude that he is willing enough to exercise the qualifications which he has obtained. Suppose that we have before us a person who is anxious to wait upon the sick. She is a woman of the most excellent character, in all respects faultless, but not yet fitted for a nurse till she shall have walked the hospitals; and to do this she must give up the comforts of home, undertake a world of drudgery, and see much that will cause her pain, for she must herself see and understand what sickness means, or she will be of no use. Now, if this person be willing, for the sake of becoming a nurse, to undergo personal discomfort and physical weariness, to put herself to much self-denial, and to exercise much anxious thought, and if, indeed, all the preparatory process has been already undergone, who doubts her willingness afterwards to exercise the office of a nurse, for which she has taken so much pains to fit herself? Does not the case speak for itself? Then transfer it to the Lord Jesus. He has undergone all that was necessary to make him a complete Saviour, in all points qualified for his work; and none may dare insult him by saying that he is unwilling to exercise his office and save the sons of men.

Remember that what the Son of God underwent to fit him for a Saviour was extremely humiliating and painful. He left the throne for the cross, the adoration of angels for the mockery of menials. He came from yonder bright world, where they need not the light of the sun, to visit those who sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death. He was so poor that he had not where to lay his head, so despised that even his own received him not, but hid, as it were, their faces from him. He endured death itself in the most cruel circumstances of ignominy and pain. All this was needful ere he could be made perfect as a Priest and a Saviour; but all this he has undergone, and has cried concerning it all, "It is finished." What are these

scars in his hands? What but the tokens of his fitness for his office? What is that gash in his side? What but the warrant that the work is complete, which renders him a perfect Saviour? And will you tell me after this that he declines to save? that he turns a deaf ear to a sinner's cry? that you have pleaded with him by the month together, and yet have not been answered? that you are willing to come and fling yourself at his feet, but he is unwilling to receive you? Oh, utter not a falsehood at once so groundless, so dishonouring to him, and so defiling to yourself. Jesus must be willing to save, or else he never could have submitted to so painful a preparation in order that he might be installed in his office as Mediator; he would not have toiled so sternly to reach that high position in which he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him if he had not a hearty goodwill towards sinners, and a readiness to receive them. Trembling sinner, if you conclude that Jesus Christ is not willing to save, you must suppose that he prepared himself deliberately, and with painful cost, to do nothing; for if he do not save men, then he came without an errand, and died without a purpose; for he certainly did not come to condemn them. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." If, then, he do not save that which is lost, he has prepared himself for nothing, has lived in vain, and shed his blood without purpose. If you can thus think of him and of his work, I marvel at your unbelief, and tremble to think how fatally sin has blinded your eyes. Moreover, if you think Jesus unwilling to save, you will have to suppose that, having spent a life in obedience, and endured a death of agony, he has, after all, changed his mind, and renounced the object once so dear to him. You will have to believe that the heart which bled, and even after death poured out both blood and water, has suddenly become petrified; that the eyes which wept over Jerusalem retain no longer any pity for the sons of men, and that he who prayed for his murderers, "Father, forgive them," has now become stern in spirit, and will have nothing to do with sinners when they seek his mercy. Oh, do not my Lord so great a dishonour as to think thus of him! Lo, he is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"! Interrogate those scars and see if there be a change in him; look into his face and see if love has departed thence! He is in heaven at this day, ever living to make intercession for sinners; and I ask you would he continue to intercede if he had ceased to love? Would he not throw up the office in disgust if his nature were so transformed that he no longer cared to save the lost? Away with your dishonouring fears. Do you dream that Jesus has saved all he designed to bless, and that the full tale of his redeemed is made up? Do you imagine that the merit of his blood has come to an end, that his power and willingness to forgive have gone clean from him? It cannot be so, for is it not written, "Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession"? and that has not been fulfilled yet. It is written "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many," but as yet the many have not been justified, for the number of the saved is small compared with the

multitude that descend to hell. Will not Jesus have the pre-eminence? Will he not redeem unto himself a number that no man can number? When the whole poem of human history has been written, will it not be found to be in honour of grace abounding over sin, Christ victor over Satan, mercy triumphant over wrath? Will not Jesus and his seed outnumber the seed of the serpent? How else would it be true that his bruised heel shall break the serpent's head? Instead of believing that Jesus has ceased to save, I look for a fuller display of his power, in glad days when nations shall be born at once. The fountain flows on with undiminished stream: O sinner, drink and live. You must not imagine, poor, trembling sinner, that the dear Redeemer has undergone all his agonies to prepare him to save men, and yet is unwilling to perform his sacred office; such a wicked fancy will be ruinous to your soul, and grievous to his Spirit. Oh, that you would go and try him, and you would find him ready to save you.

II. The second thought will bring us nearer to the text. Consider, I pray you, in the second place, **THE PERFECT FITNESS OF THE SAVIOUR FOR HIS WORK.** We will view the fitness both *Godward* and *manward*.

View it *Godward*. Sinner, if any one is to deal with God for you so as to avail on your behalf, he must be one of God's choosing, for "no man taketh this honour upon himself, but he that was called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." Christ was ordained of God from all eternity to stand as the representative of his people before the throne. "It pleased the Father to bruise him." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." He from old eternity was set apart to be the High Priest and the Redeemer of his people. Can you not in this see grounds for resting upon him? What God appoints it must be safe for us to accept.

In order that Jesus Christ, being appointed, should be fit for his office, it was necessary that he should become man. Man had sinned, and man must make reparation to the broken law. God would not accept an angel as a substitute, for the law had to do with man, and as the race had revolted, it must be through one of the race that God's justice should be vindicated. But Jesus was God: how then could he become our Saviour? Behold the mystery! God was manifest in the flesh. He descended to the manger of Bethlehem, he nestled in a woman's bosom; for as the children were partakers of flesh and blood he himself also took part in the same. Sinner, behold your incarnate God, the Eternal one, dwells among dying men, veiled in their mortal flesh, that he may save men. This is the greatest fact ever related in human ears. We hear it as a common thing, but the angels have never ceased to wonder since first they sang of it and charmed the listening shepherds. God has come down to man to lift man up to God. Surely it is the sin of sins if we reject a Saviour who has made such a stoop in order to be perfectly qualified to save.

"Being found in fashion as a man," it was necessary towards God that Jesus should fulfil the law, and work out a perfect obedience. The obedience of an angel would not have met the case: it was from man that obedience was required, and a man must render it. Behold, then, this second Adam, this new head of our race, rendering to God

the complete obedience which the law demanded, loving God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself. From the time when he said to his mother, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" till the time when he exultingly cried "It is finished," he was in all things the obedient servant of the great Father, and now his righteousness stands for us, and we are "accepted in the Beloved." The High Priest who is to intercede for us must wear upon his forehead "Holiness unto the Lord"; and truly such a High Priest we have, for Jesus is "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

Nor was this all towards God. The High Priest who should save us must be able to offer a sufficient sacrifice, efficacious to make atonement, so as to vindicate eternal justice and make an end of sin. Oh, hear ye this, ye sinners, and let it ring like music in your ears: Jesus Christ has not offered the blood of bullocks nor of goats, but he has presented his own blood upon the altar. "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "This man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." The blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sin, but the blood of the Son of God has infinite efficacy, and for every one for whom the great surety died, all sin was put away, since he bore its penalty; the law could ask no more. Pitiful, indeed, is the man's case who has no interest in the atoning sacrifice; his sin lies heavy upon him and wrath hangs over him. Wretched is the sinner who, being conscious of his guilt, and being bidden to believe in Jesus, yet continues to look to himself, and so does dishonour to this sacrifice, so precious in the sight of the Lord. The blood of Jesus speaks better things than that of Abel, and woe to the man who despises its gracious cry.

"How they deserve the deepest hell,
That slight the joys above!
What chains of vengeance must they feel,
Who break such cords of love."

Godward, then, Christ became perfect as our Saviour, and when he had finished his work, the Lord certified the completion and acceptance of it, by raising him from the dead, and giving him a place at his own right hand. He who, as judge, was offended by our sin, is now well pleased in his Son, and has established a covenant of peace with us for his sake. Is God satisfied with Jesus, and are you dissatisfied? Is infinite justice content, and do your doubts and fears prevent your being reconciled? Do you stand by and say that Jesus cannot save you, when God's word declares that he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him? Do you set up your prejudices and unbeliefs, under the pretence of humility, in opposition to the declaration of God, who cannot lie? The Lord declares his approbation of his dear Son; why, then, do you cavil? God forbid that you should indulge in such a sin any longer. Rather end your opposition, and where God finds rest, there find rest yourself; if the Lord be content to save those who obey Jesus, be you obedient by the help of God's blessed Spirit.

But, beloved, I have said that Christ Jesus, as our High Priest, needed to be perfected *manward*. O sinner, consider his perfections as they concern yourself. That he might save us he must have power to pardon, and to renew our hearts; these he has to the full, for all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth; he both gives repentance and remission. But, alas, we are afraid of him; we shrink from approaching him, and therefore to make him a perfect Saviour he must be tender of heart, willing to come to us when we cannot come to him, compassionate to our ignorance, and ready to help our infirmities. It needs one who can stoop to bind up gaping wounds which cannot heal themselves, one who does not mind touching the leper, or bending over the fever-stricken, or going to the grave where corruption pollutes the air; one who does not ask the leper to make himself clean first, but comes into contact with him in all his foulness and abomination, and saves him. Now, brethren, Jesus bids us come to him because he is meek and lowly in heart; it is said of him, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." He was called "A friend of publicans and sinners." His name is love, and his heart is pity.

To make tenderness practical a man must not only have a gentle nature, but he must have undergone the sufferings which he pities, so as to sympathise with them. We may try, dear friends, to sympathise with persons in certain afflictions, but the attempt does not succeed unless we have trodden in the same paths. Now, sinner, have you a broken heart? So had Christ, for he said, "Reproach hath broken mine heart." Are you trembling under divine anger? He also cried, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" What burden do you bear? His load was far heavier than yours. Are you wounded? He was nailed to the tree! Do you feel exceeding sorrowful, even unto death? So did he, until the bloody sweat stood on his brow. He is a brotherly Saviour, well trained in sorrow's school, deeply versed in the science of consolation. Jesus knows the ins and outs of our nature, he knows what is in man. Now, this is a grand qualification. If you go to a physician, and yours is a very peculiar case, you are doubtful as to his skill; but when he shows that he knows all about you by describing the symptoms exactly as they occur, and adds, "I was once afflicted with this same sickness myself," you say to yourself, "This man will suit me." Just so is it with Jesus:—

"He knows what fierce temptations mean,
For he has felt the same."

So far as it is possible for a sinless one to do so, he sympathises with the whole of your condition; he knows the struggles within, the fears, the bitter tears, the groanings which cannot be uttered; he knows every jot and tittle of your experience, and is, therefore, eminently qualified to cope with your case. If you were on board a vessel, and had lost your bearings, you would be glad enough to see a pilot in the offing. Here he is on board, and you say, "Pilot, do you know where we are?" "Yes," says he, "of course I do. I can tell you within a yard." "It is well, Mr. Pilot, but can you bring us to the port we want to make?" "Certainly," says he. "Do you know the coast?" "Coast, sir! I know every bit of headland, and rock,

and quicksand, as well as I know the cut of my face in a looking-glass. I have passed over every inch of it in all tides and all weathers. I am a child at home here." "But, pilot, do you know that treacherous shoal?" "Yes, and I remember almost running aground upon it once, but we escaped just in time. I know all those sands as well as if they were my own children." You feel perfectly safe in such hands. Such is the qualification of Christ to pilot sinners to heaven. There is not a bay, or a creek, or a rock, or a sand between the Maelstrom of hell and the Fair Havens of heaven but what Christ has sounded all the deeps and the shallows, measured the force of the current, and seen the set of the stream; he knows how to steer so as to bring the ship right away by the best course into the heavenly harbour.

There is one delightful thing in Christ's perfect qualification to save, namely, that he "ever liveth to make intercession for us." If Jesus Christ were dead and had left us the boon of salvation that we might freely help ourselves to it, we should have much to praise him for; but he is not dead, he is alive. He left us a legacy, but many a legacy is left which never gets to the legatee: lo, the great maker of the will is alive to carry out his own intentions. He died, and so made the legacy good; he rose again and lives to see that none shall rob any one of his beloved of the portion he has left. What think you of Christ pleading in heaven? Have you ever estimated the power of that plea? He is day and night pleading for all them that obey him, pleading for sinners, pleading with God that pardon may be given to the greatest of offenders. And does he plead in vain? Is he unacceptable with the Father? It cannot be imagined. Wherefore, then, O sinner, do you continue to look to yourself? How much wiser would it be for you to turn your eyes to your Lord. You say, "I am not perfect." Why do you want to be? The perfection is in him. "But, alas, I am not this and I am not that." What has that to do with it? Jesus is all that is wanted. If you were to be your own saviour you would be in a bad case indeed, for you are all faults and failings; but if he is the Saviour why do you talk about what *you* are? *He* is fully equipped for the work; he never asked your help, it is an insult to suppose that he wants it. What if you be dead in sin, ay, and rotten in vice and corruption? he is able to raise you from the dead, and to make you sit at his own right hand in the heavenly places, for he is perfect as a Saviour, and is able to save to the uttermost.

III. The third point is this, I want you to notice THE HIGH POSITION WHICH OUR LORD JESUS TAKES IN REFERENCE TO SALVATION. According to the text, "he became *the author* of eternal salvation." He is the designer, creator, worker, and cause of salvation. By him salvation has been accomplished: "His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory;" "He hath trodden the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with him." He is the author of salvation in this sense, that every blessing comes through him. All the various departments of salvation, whether they be election, calling, justification, or sanctification, all bless us through him, according as the Father hath chosen us in him from before the foundation of the world. In him we are called, in him preserved, in him accepted; all grace flows from him. Christ is all, and in all. Salvation within us is all his work.

He sought us as well as bought us. His Spirit gives us the first sense of sin, and leads us to faith; he himself draws us to himself. His name is Jesus, for he saves his people from their sins.

Let me compare salvation to a book, of which Jesus is the sole author. No one has contributed a line or a thought thereto. He has never asked any human mind to write a *preface* to his work, the first word is from his pen. Some of you are trying to preface Christ's work, but your toil is fruitless, he will never bind up your wretched introduction with his golden lines of love. Come to him without a preface just as you are, steeped up to the throat in the foulness of sin, begrimed with the slime of Sodom. Come to him without previous preparation, and lay your heart's tablets before him that he may write thereon. He is an author so skilful that none have ever discovered the smallest *errata* in his work, for there are no mistakes, and no amendments are ever needed. When he saves he saves completely. He does not ask us to revise and perfect his writing, it is perfected by his own hand. He is an author to whose writing there are no *addenda*; it is finished, and he is accursed who shall add a line. We have to take the finished salvation and rejoice in it, but add to it we never may. Christ is an author who wants no man's *imprimatur*, he himself has dignity and authority enough to make his work illustrious without the patronage of man. Christ is the author of salvation. What you have to do, sinner, is to take it; not preface it, improve it or add to it, but to take it just as it is. There it is for you, it is to be had for the taking; hold out your trembling hand and receive it: bring your empty cup and hold it under the divine fountain, and let it be filled. Faith to accept it is all that is required. Why is it that you delay? You want to make yourself better before you believe in Jesus; that is to say, you want to be the author of salvation, and so to elbow Christ out of his place. "Oh," but you will say, "I cannot pray as I want." If you could pray as you ought would Christ then be able to save you? He wants your prayers to help him, does he? "Oh, but I do not feel as I ought." Your feelings are to help Christ, are they? "Oh, but I want to be different." And if you were different then Christ would be able to save, but as you now are he cannot save you? Do you mean that? Do you dare to say that he cannot forgive you this very moment, while the word is coming out of my mouth? Do you mean that this very instant, just as you are, a sinful, and all but damned sinner, that he cannot forgive you now, if you trust him? If you do so mean, you are deceived, for he is able *now* to save you. Having been made perfect, he is the author of eternal salvation to every one that obeys him, and he is able at this moment to speak peace to the conscience of any one and every one who now obeys him. God grant you grace to catch the thought which I try to make plain, but which only the Spirit of God can lead you to understand.

IV. My next thought is this. Dwell for a few minutes in devout meditation upon THE REMARKABLE CHARACTER OF THE SALVATION WHICH CHRIST HAS WROUGHT OUT. He is the author of *eternal* salvation. Oh, how I love that word "*eternal*!" "Eternal salvation!" Then the Jewish high priest had offered a sacrifice, the worshipper

went home satisfied, for the blood was sprinkled and the offering accepted : but in a short time he sinned again, and he had to bring another sacrifice. Once a year, when the high priest entered within the veil and came out and pronounced a blessing on the people, all Israel went home glad ; but next year there must be the same remembrance of sin, and the same sprinkling with blood, for the blood of bulls and of goats could not really put away sin, it was only a type. How blessed is the truth that our Lord Jesus will not need to bring another sacrifice at any time, for he has obtained eternal salvation through his one offering.

It is an eternal salvation as opposed to every other kind of deliverance. There are salvations spoken of in the Bible, which are transient, for they only deal with temporal trouble and passing distress, but he who is once taken out of the horrible pit of unforgiven sin by the hand of Christ will never lie in that horrible place again. Being raised from the dead, we die no more. We are effectually delivered from the dominion of sin when Jesus Christ comes forth to save us.

It is eternal salvation in this sense, that it rescues us from eternal condemnation and everlasting punishment. Glory be to God, everlasting punishment shall never fall on the believer, for everlasting salvation puts it far away.

It is eternal salvation as opposed to the risk of falling away and perishing. Some of our brethren seem very pleased with a salvation of a temporary character, whose continuance depends upon their own behaviour. I do not envy them, and shall not try to rob them of their treasure, for I would not have their salvation if they were to press me ever so much. I am a great deal more satisfied to have eternal salvation, a salvation based upon a finished work, carried on by divine power, and undertaken by an unchangeable Saviour. Oh, but I hear some say, you may have eternal life to-day, and lose it to-morrow. What do words mean? How can that life be eternal which you can lose? Why, then the life could not have been eternal. Your doctrine is a solecism in language, a contradiction in terms. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "Because I live ye shall live also." Sinner, if you believe in Jesus, he will not save you to-day and let you perish to-morrow, he will give you eternal salvation, which neither death nor hell, nor time, nor eternity shall ever destroy, for "who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" The man who believes in Jesus is not as happy, but he is as safe from final condemnation as if he were in heaven.

"His honour is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep ;
All that his heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep.

"Nor death nor hell shall ere remove
His favourites from his breast ;
In the dear bosom of his love
They must for ever rest."

If this doctrine be not taught in Scripture nothing is taught there at

all, and words have no meaning. On the very forefront of Scripture is written, "He that believeth shall be saved." God grant us grace to realise that promise.

When the text says "eternal salvation" it means that it will ripen into eternal bliss. You are saved from eternal misery, you are preserved by eternal life from falling back upon your old life, and you shall be brought to eternal bliss. Whosoever Christ saves shall see the face of God with joy for ever, as surely as he is born. Christ was made perfect on purpose that he might be the author of eternal salvation.

V. The last thought is THE PERSONS CONCERNED IN THIS SALVATION.

"To all them that obey him." The word "obey" here, according to Dr. Owen's admirable translation, signifies "obedience upon hearing," and he very rightly says that this indicates faith. To obey Christ is in its very essence to trust him, or believe in him; and we might read our text as if it said, "The author of eternal salvation to all them that believe in him." If you would be saved your first act of obedience must be to trust Jesus wholly, simply, heartily, and alone. Recline your soul wholly on Jesus and you are saved now. Is that all? Certainly, that is all! But it says "*obey*"? Precisely so; and do you not know that every man who trusts Christ obeys him. I gave just now the illustration of a pilot. The pilot comes on board and says, "If I am to steer you into harbour you must trust me with the command of the vessel." That is done and he gives orders, "Reef that sail!" Suppose the captain says to the sailor, "Leave that sail alone, I tell you!" is it not clear that he does not trust the pilot? If he trusted him he would have his orders carried out. Suppose the pilot cries out to the engineer, "Ease her!" and the captain countermands the order, the pilot is evidently not trusted, and if the vessel runs ashore it will be no fault of his. So is it with regard to our Lord. The moment you put yourself into his hands you must obey him, or you have not trusted him. To change the figure; the doctor feels your pulse. "I will send you some medicine," says he, "that will be very useful, and besides that, you must take a warm bath." He comes the next day; you say to him, "Doctor, I thought you were going to heal me, I am not a bit better." "Why," said he, "you do not trust me." "I do, sir; I am sure I have every faith in you." "No," says he, "you do not believe in me, for there is that bottle of medicine untouched, you have not taken a drop of it. Have you had the bath?" "No, sir." "Well, you are making a fool of me; the fact is I shall not come again. You do not believe in me. I am no physician to you." Every man who believes Christ obeys him; believing and obeying always run side by side. Do you not know that Christ does not come merely to blot out the past, he comes to save us from being what we are, to save us from a bad temper, from a proud eye, from a wanton look, from a corrupt heart, from covetous desires, from a rebellious will, and an indolent spirit. Now this cannot be done unless we obey, for if we are to continue to live in sin, salvation is a mere word, and to boast of it would be ridiculous. How can we be saved from sin if we are living in sin? A man says, "Christ saves me, and yet I get drunk." Sir, you lie. How can you be saved

from drunkenness when you are living in drunkenness? "But Christ saves me," says another, "although I am worldly and gay and frivolous." How saves you? Man alive! Do you tell me the doctor has healed you of the leprosy while yet it is white on your brow? How can you say he has healed you of ague while you are even now shivering with it. Surely you do not know what you are talking about. Christ comes to save us from living as we once did; he comes to make new men of us; to give us new hearts and right spirits; and when he does this he will not let us go back to our old sins again, but leads us onward in the path of holiness.

Mark well that every man who obeys Christ shall be saved, whatever his past life may have been. Every one of you, whatever your present condition may be, shall be saved if you obey the Redeemer, for "he is the author of eternal salvation to *all* them that obey him." But mark, not to one more; no soul that refuses to obey Christ shall have any part or lot in this matter. Men may make what professions they please, but they shall never gain eternal salvation unless they obey Jesus. Those gates which open to let in the obedient close fast to shut out the unbelieving and disobedient. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life." The extent of God's love to the world is this—that he loves it so as to save all who believe in Jesus; but he will never save a soul which dies unbelieving and disobedient. If you reject Christ, you shut in your own face the only door of hope, "for he that believeth not is condemned already."

I am sometimes confronted with this statement—that faith is the gift of God, and is wrought in man by the power of the Spirit of God, and therefore I have no business to command and entreat men to believe. I am not slow to answer my opposers; for in my inward soul I know that saving faith always is the gift of God, and is in every case the work of the Holy Spirit; but I am not yet an idiot, and therefore I also know that *faith is the act of man*. The Holy Ghost does not believe for us. What has he to believe? The Holy Ghost does not repent for us. What has he to repent of? You must yourself believe, and it must be your own personal act, or you will never be saved! I charge you before God, do not let the grand truth that faith is the gift of God ever lead you to forget that you never will be saved except you personally believe in Jesus. If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ thou shalt be saved, for here is the gospel, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved"; and here is the solemn penalty appended to it, "He that believeth not shall be damned."

Sinner, there was never such a Saviour as Christ is. He is the very Saviour for you; he is both willing and able to save, and knows how to do it. He has promised to save all that trust him. Go and try him, and if this morning you shall trust him and he repels you, come and tell me, and I will leave off preaching. When I find my Master casts out those that come to him, I will put my shutters up, and have done with the business of the gospel. I can only speak as I find. I went to him trembling and dismayed, and I thought he would never receive me; but I received as my welcome "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without?" He washed

me from my sins in the selfsame hour, and sent me on my way rejoicing; and here I have been these three-and-twenty years preaching free grace and dying love, and never have I yet lighted upon a sinner whom Jesus has cast out; and when I do meet with such a case, I must have done preaching for very shame. I am not afraid, however; for such a case shall never be heard of in this world. No, nor in the infernal deep does there lie a single soul condemned for sin who would dare to say, "I sought the Lord and he would not hear me, I trusted in Christ and he would not save me, I pleaded the promise but it was not fulfilled." No, it shall never be; while God is true no believer shall perish. Here is the promise, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Happy is the preacher who has such a gospel to preach as I have preached to you, but I cannot make you receive it. I can bring the horse to the water, but I cannot make him drink. God must do this. Oh, that he may lead you to receive eternal salvation by Jesus Christ, to the glory of his name. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews v., vii.

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"I THOUGHT."

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 17TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I thought."—2 Kings v. 11.

OUR great object in preaching to-day will be the conversion of sinners. There is a great deal else to be done, saints want building up, comforting, and quickening; but while myriads of men remain careless until they are swept away into perdition, it becomes us to bend our main strength to the most needful work of winning souls for Jesus. Therefore, again this morning I shall leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which has gone astray, pleading earnestly with God that he will bless my pleading with men, so that while I discourse with them concerning their folly in rejecting the Saviour, his Spirit may discourse with them also, and lead them to flee to Jesus for eternal life.

At the outset, however, we will have a few words for believers. Preconceptions of what ought to be the Lord's mode of action are very injurious, even to those who have true faith in God, and yet they are very frequently indulged. We map out beforehand the path of providence and the method of mercy, forgetting that the Lord's way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known. When the Lord does not choose to act according to our notions we start back and cry half indignantly, "I thought he would surely act otherwise."

This folly is seen in believers sometimes in reference to their way to heaven. They are like the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt. There is a straight road to Canaan, why are they not allowed to take it? Instead of a direct march onward they are led round about with ever varying experience. Their course is by turns progressive, retrograde, and standing still; to the right and to the left, forward and retreat. Does not providence often perplex you, and run counter not only to your wishes, but to your deliberate judgment? That which for many reasons seems to be the best does not happen to you,

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while that which appears to be distressingly injurious overtakes you. Your forecastings do not come true, your day-dreams are not realised, your schemes for life are not carried out. You cannot understand why you are thus baffled. Why is it that you are kept in poverty when you could have made such good use of riches? How is it you are laid aside just when you could have been most useful? Why have talents been denied to you when you feel you would have used them with such diligence and fidelity? How is it that others who trifle away life are endowed with ten talents while you who are industrious and zealous have scarcely one? You have ventured to propose such inquiries, but you have not been able to answer them; it is as well that you should not, for our business is not the solution of problems, but the performance of precepts. Let us cease from our own wisdom, and leave all arrangements in the hand of our heavenly Father: our thoughts are vanity, his thoughts are precious.

The like fault will arise in connection with our prayers. We pray believingly, and an answer comes, for believing prayer never fails, but the answer comes in an unexpected fashion and not at all as we thought. We prayed God to bless our family, and, lo, our wife is taken away, or our child sickens. We besought the Lord to make us more spiritual, and he has sent a severe affliction to grieve us.

"I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and ev'ry grace;
Might more of his salvation know,
And seek more earnestly his face.

"I hoped that in some favour'd hour
At once he'd answer my request,
And by his love's constraining power
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

"Instead of this, he made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart;
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in ev'ry part.

"Yea, more, with his own hand he seemed
Intent to aggravate my wee;
Cross'd all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.

"'Lord, why is this?' I trembling cried;
'Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?'
'Tis in this way,' the Lord replied,
'I answer prayer for grace and faith.'"

"I thought," say you, "but oh, how different from my thoughts!" Yes, but how much better than your thoughts! You shall find that the Lord is doing for you exceeding abundantly above all that you asked or even thought. God is enriching you by your poverty, he is healing you by your sickness, and drawing you nearer to himself by driving you further away from creature confidence. Often and often we fail to see God's gracious answers to prayer because we make up our minds as to the way in which they will come. We refuse letters from heaven because they are sent in black-bordered envelopes. We

thought the Lord would send us bread and meat by angels, and instead thereof he sends it by ravens. When we see the Lord's hand in unexpected ways, we are apt to say, half in disappointment, "*I thought it would have been otherwise.*"

Perhaps we have carried these preconceptions of ours still further; for we have actually thought beforehand that God would not bless us at all. He has been graciously designing our good by affliction, and we have written bitter things both against him and against ourselves, for we have *thought* that he had utterly forsaken us, and given our lives for a prey. We have cried with Jacob, "Joseph is not, Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me." When the good old patriarch stood up in the chariot and felt Joseph's warm kiss upon his cheek, he might have said, "I thought that all things were against me, but now I see that I misjudged my God. He sent my Joseph here to provide for me and for my household in the days of famine; and he fetched my Simeon and my Benjamin away, that it might be all the more easy for me to come down to the place where my sons had been before me. The Lord has dealt well with his servant, but I thought not so." Dear brethren, leave off these forecastings, for blind unbelief is sure to err: the trade of a prophet does not suit many of God's servants. We reach down the telescope, for we are curious to peer into the future, and having breathed upon the glass with anxious breath, we cry out in dismay, "I see nothing but clouds and darkness before me." Yet our pictures of the dreadful future dissolve into the realities of boundless goodness: as we see goodness and mercy following us all the days of our lives, we blush for our unbelief, for we had said in our heart, "I shall one day perish by the enemy's hand." May God save us from that cruel "*I thought,*" which torments us and belies our God.

On the other hand, we sometimes make flattering forecasts of the future which are equally untrue. "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong." That was David's thought. Everybody else might be tossed to and fro, but he would be calm and confident. No doubt others might be in trouble and in doubt, but his faith was so firm and his position so well established that he feared no change or commotion. He was too strong to tremble at the assaults from which others fled away discomfited. Now listen to the sequel: "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." Like any other man, he feared, and his firm mountain turned out to be only a rolling cloud which fled before the blast. The man who was so brave asked for the wings of a dove wherewith to take his flight. Beloved, we must give up this prophesying of our own greatness, for it is a mere bag of wind. It is the very worst form of judging what is to be and what ought to be. Things are in better hands than ours; we have enough to do to obey the Lord's commands without setting up to be managers of providence. Let him plan and let us trust. Walk as in his sight, resigned to his will, and you shall rejoice all your days; but if you begin to map out a course for yourselves, to be your own guides and providers, your way will be both rough and dangerous, and your heart will be wounded with many sorrows. So far, then, I have read a lesson to believers. I must now

turn to the unconverted, and in so doing I ask every Christian man's prayer that a blessing may attend my words.

Preconceived notions of the way of salvation are great hindrances to the very existence of faith in the minds of the unconverted. It is our business from Sabbath to Sabbath, yea, every day, to tell the sinner that "he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." As clearly as words can put it, we repeat it ten thousand times—that to trust in Jesus is the only way of salvation, for Jesus has offered a great and acceptable atonement before God for the sins of men, and whoever will come to him and rest upon his atonement hath eternal life. We are met at once with opposition, and men turn upon their heel and reject our message, because it is not what they thought it would be. To wash in Jordan and be clean is not according to their notion, for they expected some more difficult, mysterious, and showy way of salvation. "Behold, I thought," say they, and they go their way, either in a rage, or else in utter carelessness. Come, friend, let me get you by the button-hole and talk with you upon this matter, and may the Lord make both of us wise.

First, *how could you expect to find out the way of salvation by your own thoughts?* There are a great many things which men can discover, and the inventiveness of the human mind about earthly things appears to have scarcely any limit; but, with regard to heavenly things, the natural man has not the faculty of discerning, and never did make a discovery yet, and never will. Whatever is known of God is made known by God. Upon the face of nature the existence of God is written, but we look in vain for any indication of a plan of salvation. Jesus alone is the Saviour: how can you imagine that his way of saving can be known to men except as he has revealed it? I will ask you a question. Suppose you were sick of a mysterious and fatal disorder, and a skilful physician was recommended to you, would you expect to foresee that physician's mode of action? Would you go to him and then hesitate to accept his advice because it was contrary to what you had supposed it would be? If so, I can only say that you must be very foolish to go to a physician at all. Why not heal yourself? Your case is complicated, and here is a surgeon who, by long experience and wonderful skill, has acquired power to deal with your disorder. Do you insist upon it that he shall only operate as you approve? Is he to use knife and lancet, and band and splint, at your dictation? If so, you had better dispense with him, and call in a nurse who has never studied the art, but is quite able to do your bidding, for you are surgeon to yourself. Unconverted friend, your case is one in which you cannot help yourself, and none but Jesus can save you. How can you expect to invent for yourself a plan of salvation? You are bidden to become Christ's disciple—do you expect to know more than your Master? Are you to teach him, or is he to teach you?

If you could discover the way to heaven for yourself, why has the Lord given you the Bible? That inspired volume is a superfluity if your thoughts are to appoint the way of salvation. And what need is there of the Holy Ghost to reveal truth and lead us into it, if, after all, our thoughts are to be the rule? Oh, sirs, your arrogance—for I dare not call it less—makes you claim to be equal to the Physician of souls, to be beyond the need of revelation, and superior to the assistance of

the Holy Ghost. Retract, I pray you, and leave a position which involves such blasphemies.

I will ask every awakened sinner here who has been settling in his thoughts what the plan of salvation ought to be, what peace his thoughts have brought to him? How far have your inventions brought you? They have led you to physicians of no value; they have caused you to spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not. You have leaned upon reeds, and trusted in shadows. Kindling a fire with your own fuel, you have for a moment rejoiced in the sparks thereof, but ere long you have had to lie down in sorrow. I have passed through your state of mind. I tried full many an invention, but upon them all was written, "Vanity of vanities." Self was at the bottom of all; in some form or other I looked to self, and I looked in vain. I was like a man in a bog, who the more he struggles the more he sinks; or like a prisoner upon the treadmill, who rises no higher, but only wearies himself by his climbing. No good can result from efforts made apart from faith in Jesus. However earnest and sincere we may be, we must fail in our search if we do not seek in God's way. Would it not be wise after so many bitter disappointments to leave your own inventions? If they have done you no good, depend upon it they never will. You had better humble yourself as a little child, and learn from God what the plan of salvation is, and then obediently accept it. Come, poor soul, in humble obedience, read the sacred roll of inspiration, and say, "O Lord, show me what thou wouldst have me to do;" then will light break in upon you, and peace shall follow. Faith in Jesus is God's way; it will be the height of folly to set up a method of your own in competition therewith.

Let me now ask you a second question, or series of questions. *Should the plan of salvation be arranged according to your will and judgment?* You are a sinner and want pardon, your nature is depraved, and needs renewing: should the plan of forgiving and regenerating you be shaped to please your tastes and whims? Should the great Lord of mercy wait upon you, and consult you as to how he shall work out your salvation? As a reasonable man I beg you to tell me, has not the Lord an absolute right to dispense his favours as he pleases? Shall he not do as he wills with his own? You yourself perhaps are a man of generous spirit, and you relieve the poor; but suppose a poor man should dictate to you how he should be helped, and in what shape you should bestow your charity, would you listen to him for a moment? "No," you would say, "I am not bound to give you anything. If I give, I give freely, but I am not going to be bound by rules which you may choose to make." Beggars must not be choosers. Now, you, O unsaved one, are a beggar needing alms of God. Do you intend to dictate to the Most High how and in what manner he shall give his salvation to you? Act not so foolishly; as a reasonable man renounce such an idea.

But I claim for God not only that he has a sovereign right to make his own plan of salvation, but that he is infinitely wiser than you are. Had he left it to you to devise a scheme of mercy, it would have been most unfortunate for you. God knows more about man than man knows

about himself ; and the great designs of God are much more far-reaching than the expectations or desires of man, even when he is most desirous to be blessed. I do not hesitate to say that the most intelligent Christian would have been content with far less than God is accustomed to give, and that if the arrangements of divine grace had been left to us, they would have borne but very stunted proportions compared with the present dimensions of the plan of divine grace. Surely it is best to leave it with God, who will surpass all that we could desire or devise. Why should you be thinking out a way to be saved when the mind of God, which is infinite as well in love as in wisdom, has already arranged a scheme so much superior ?

Furthermore, do you not think that, if the plan of mercy were left to your choosing, you would become very self-conceited ? If you had the sketching of the system of salvation, and it were well done and fully accomplished, you would say, "My methods were admirable ! Am I not wise ? Did I not arrange it well ?" You would be proud as Lucifer, and when you got to heaven, saved on your own system, you would have ground for glorying, and many a note upon those golden harps would be dedicated to the glory of your own skill, and few enough would be consecrated to your Redeemer. Now, an arrangement which would increase our self-conceit would be fatal to salvation, for self-conceit is a part of the sin from which we need to be saved. Salvation is the destruction of sin, but a system which would foster self-conceit and self-confidence is evidently unadapted to the end in view. Therefore, since your own plan could not save you, bow your hearts to the method of divine grace, and live.

Moreover, consider, O man, you who desire to sketch for yourself the road to heaven ; do you not see how you derogate from the glory of God ? Did the Lord ask your judgment when he made the heavens ? when he digged the channels of the deep ? when he poured out the water-floods ? when he balanced the clouds ? when he set the stars in their places ? With whom took he counsel ? who instructed him ? Who was with him to stretch the line or hold the plummet ? He himself, in the old creation, made all things by his infinite wisdom ; think you that he needs your aid in the new ? In the work of redemption, did he ask your help or take your counsel when he made the covenant of grace and fixed it by firm decree ? Did you stand in the wine-press, side by side with the Redeemer, in the day when his garments were red with blood ? Have you contributed to the ransom price wherewith he redeemed his people from going down into the pit ? Creation and redemption have been hitherto works of God alone, and has the Lord now a need of you ? Has he called you into his counsels, that you may guide him as to the application of redemption ? Dare you pluck Jehovah by the sleeve and tell him what he ought to do in order to save a guilty worm like you ? Must he needs ask you how he shall deal with you ? O man, it will not do, the supposition cannot be endured. You must leave the Lord to save you as he wills, and as his plan is that of simple faith, it is wickedness to set up another. Renounce your proud conceit ; as you would be saved, renounce it, and humbly come and say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Here is his message of life to your souls : "Incline

your ear, and come unto me : hear, and your soul shall live ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

Now, if you have determined what the plan of salvation ought to be, I ask you, next, *by what rule are you able to preconceive that plan?* You refuse to be told what that plan really is, because you think you know beforehand. Now by what rule have you judged? I will tell you in one word. The most of sinners conceive the plan of salvation to be what they wish it to be. They *thought*; but their wish is father to their thought. Naaman with his chariots and his horses wanted the obsequious homage of the prophet, and therefore he thought, "Surely he will come out to me." Men love to be flattered, they want a plan of salvation which will gratify their self-esteem, and enable them to show what dignity there is in human nature. They think that man should be treated like an emperor in disguise, and mercy should be bestowed on him as if it were a reward for merit. As they wish it to be, so they believe it is. Gentlemen of the modern thought school think out what God ought to be, like the German who evolved a camel out of his own consciousness, and was very disgusted when he found that it had a hump. They make a god as they imagine he ought to be, and deify the creature of their addled brains, and then turn to the Bible for passages which may be twisted to support their ideas : instead of coming to the Book to learn what is in it, and accepting its every teaching as truth, they bring their notions to the Bible and try to mould it to their views. In this spirit men believe the road to heaven to be what they wish it to be, but it is not so.

But you assure me that you have conceived the way of salvation according to your understanding. Well, then, you have conceived it wrongly to a certainty, for what is your understanding compared with the understanding of God? A little child has asked a favour of his father, his father knows it to be difficult to grant it, but he has, at great expense and skill, arranged it; and, now, is the way in which it is to be accomplished to be according to the child's understanding? No, I say, it must be according to the father's understanding, for that is more able to lead the way; and beside, the father is the benefactor. In your case, is your understanding to be the guide, or God's? I will suppose you to be a person of considerable education, far above the common level, but yet I would have you remember that "as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God's thoughts above your thoughts, and his ways above your ways." Wherefore, then, should you wish to measure the dealings of the Most High by so short a line as your own? Have done with this folly!

"Well," say you, "but I have received my ideas from my parents." Well, then, who were your parents? for that is a very great point in such a case. Who were they, and were they saved? Suppose your parents were lost, is that a reason why you should be? Nobody here who has a blind father would consider it his duty to put his eyes out by way of honouring his parents. If a man were born of a crippled parent, and God blessed him with all his limbs and faculties, he would not consider himself obliged to limp, or use a crutch, or twist his foot. We have an old proverb that if a man were born in a stable he need not be

him that believeth. Your plan of pardon without an expiation would not work ; it would not give confidence to you, and it would certainly dishonour the character of the Most High.

But you have thought that if you are to be saved, you must of necessity experience great horrors, as many have done. You have read of John Bunyan and others passing through the Slough of Despond, and you have set it down as a fact that you ought to wallow there also. But wherefore and why, beloved ? How does this tend to salvation ? Is doubting the mercy of God a good and useful thing ? Truly, some who are brought to Jesus are long in coming, but if he pleases to lead you by a further way, why complain ? Is not the gospel way the best way ? Believe and live—is not that enough ? Why, if the terrors did come upon you, they could not help you ; or if they did, you would trust in your despairs, and this would be a false way.

"Then," say you, "I stipulate for raptures and excitements ; if I have these, I will believe." Joy will come after believing, it is a gift of God with which he rewards faith. If the Lord required joy and rapture of you, you could no more render them than if the way of works were still in vogue. "Jesus only" is your hope, why demand more ?

Now I come to the point. I have looked at what you would like salvation to be, and I have told you what it is. I will ask you this question—*To what do you object in it ?* Do you object to being saved simply by faith, because it appears to you to be too mysterious ? Mysterious ! It is the essence of simplicity. You make it mysterious by refusing to understand it, and not believing it to be so plain. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." To believe is to trust, and whosoever trusts in the atoning blood is saved. Where is the mystery ?

Then men turn round and say, "Then it seems like nothing at all." But Jesus says, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." It is the work which God works, the grandest of all works, to believe in Jesus Christ. Count you it nothing, when God has elected it to be the grand means of renewing the heart by the Holy Ghost ? Faith is the spring which moves all our nature ; he who believes learns to love, and learning to love, he is changed from sin to holiness.

"Yes, but this believing makes a man into a mere child." Is that an objection ? Then I give you no reply but the words of the Lord himself :—"Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

"Oh," says another, "it throws the whole thing so open, if whosoever believes in Jesus is saved." And do you want it closed ? Do you crave a monopoly for yourself and your little coterie ? Oh, sir, God thinks not as you do ; and when your heart is enlarged you will yourself be ashamed of having made such a remark.

"Well, but I do not like salvation by grace alone, for it implies so much against me. I feel as Naaman did when the prophet said, 'Wash and be clean.' What do I want washing for ? Am I dirty ? Do you insinuate that this leprosy of mine comes because I have not bathed often enough ? I am insulted by you." Men regard the gospel as insulting their dignity, and therefore they turn away from

it. They talk in this fashion : "What, believe and live ! is that all ? That way of salvation would suit a harlot or a drunkard, and I am just, upright, honourable. Simply look to Christ as the dying thief did on the tree ? Such a religion suits a thief, but it does not suit me." So you would like to have one way to heaven for yourself and people of quality, and a back gate to let in the guilty. There is no such arrangement, sir, and I trust you will not be so foolish as to be lost because your pride cannot be gratified.

"Ah," says another, "it does not give a man anything that he can be proud of ; it does not make him do anything, or be anything, that he can talk about to his neighbours. 'Only believe, and you shall be saved.' Why, the commonest boy in the street might understand that, and practise it too. I have graduated at a university, and am a man of natural endowments and great attainments : am I to be put on the same level as a shoe-black ?" Well, if that be your line of argument, my answer is, that "not many great men, not many mighty are chosen," and when you reject the gospel, you neither disappoint Christ nor his people : we knew you would do so. I sometimes feel inclined to answer people in the manner in which I replied to a caviller not long ago. He did not understand this, nor understand that, nor understand the other, and at last I said to him, "No, I do not suppose you ever will understand it." "Why not ?" said he. "Because," I said, "God reveals these things to his own elect, and not to the wise and prudent." This view of the case he did not like, but I believe it would do him more good than entering into further controversy with him. Men profess to be puzzled with this and that, when the truth is that their hearts are alienated from God ; when the heart is set right, and they are sincere inquirers, they will feel that the plan of salvation by grace is most suitable, most wise, and most acceptable. When God the Holy Spirit once makes a man to feel himself to be a lost, undone, ill-deserving, hell-deserving sinner, he seizes upon the gospel of free grace as a hungry man grasps a loaf. May God bring men to feel themselves sinners, and they will cavil at the gospel no more.

In conclusion. You thought that the gospel ought to be so-and-so, and now you are annoyed because you are told that the whole plan lies in believing : let me ask you, then, *Do you mean to be damned for the sake of a whim ?* Come, I will not mince the matter. Do you mean to lose heaven and be cast into hell for ever for the sake of your proud fancies ? For, oh, sir, I assure you in God's name his plan will not alter for you. If the Lord should alter his gospel for you, then he must alter it for another, and another, and it would be as shifting as a quicksand. There it is ; take it or leave it, but alter it you cannot. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved" is always true, and the other side of the question is true too,—*"He that believeth not shall be damned."*

Remember, also, that however much you may dislike it to-day, it will be quite as unpleasant to-morrow. If there is at present some sharp, stripping, and humbling work about it, it always will strip and always will humble you if ever you receive it. To be saved by grace alone will be as hard to your pride in ten years' time as it is

now—perhaps harder, because your heart will have grown harder, and your stomach even more haughty against the Lord God of Hosts. Surely, sir, if you are lost because you will not have salvation in God's way, you will get small comfort from your meditations when you lie in hell. When you are shut in the eternal prison-house, you will reflect that you are there because you thought God ought to save you in another way. Then you will say to yourself, "I would not take his mercy freely. I would not fall down at Jesus' feet and simply trust him. I wanted to feel, or do, or be something. I would not give up self and its foolish confidences, and here I am." Surely you will gnaw your tongue in anguish that you have been cast away for such an unreasonable reason. If others ask you how you came there, it will be a strange answer that you will have to give them. "I," says one, "I am here because I loved drink;" another says, "I am here, for I was lustful and debauched." "Ah," say you, "I was neither the one nor the other, I was kept from such sins, but I am lost, simply because when I heard the plan of salvation, I had made up my mind what it ought to be, and I stuck to my prejudices. I would not go to the Bible to search; I thought I knew as well as the Book, and as well as the Holy Spirit, and I am lost." My dear hearers, I do not ask you to believe anything I say, because I say it; fling it to the winds if it has no better authority than mine; but if it be God's word, I charge you, on your soul's peril, do not reject it. We shall face each other at the last tremendous day, and if I have told you honestly the plan of salvation, I am clear of your blood; but if, having heard it, you reject it because it does not suit your preconceived ideas, then, sirs, your doom will lie at your own door. Provoke it not; yield to the Master's bidding! May his Holy Spirit sweetly incline you, and he shall have praise. There it is; Jesus died instead of sinners, he suffered God's wrath in the stead of the guilty, and "Whosoever believeth in him hath everlasting life." Other foundation can no man lay; other name there is not under heaven among men whereby ye can be saved.

The worst of all is, you will say, "We do not reject it, but we mean to think of it to-morrow." That has been the cry of some of you for fifty years! The bell will toll for your funerals before your to-morrow comes! Do not run this frightful risk. If to believe and to be saved would incapacitate you from your daily calling, or rob you of a single honourable joy, I might see sense in your procrastination; but since to be saved will make you fit for this life, and fill your cup to the brim with joy, in addition to preparing you for the life to come, I charge you, by the living God, "kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, while his wrath is kindled but a little." The Lord bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Kings v.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—34 (Vers. I.), 560, 533.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE EAR BORED WITH AN AUL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

· C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever."—Exodus xxi. 5, 6.

THE slavery which existed amongst the ancient Jews was a very different thing from that which has disgraced humanity in modern times; and it ought also to be remembered that Moses did not institute slavery in any shape; the laws concerning it were made on purpose to repress it, to confine it within very narrow bounds, and ultimately to put an end to it. It was like the law of divorce: Moses found that law, and he knew that the people were so deeply rooted in it that it could not be forbidden; and therefore, as Jesus tells us, Moses, because of the hardness of their hearts, suffered them to put away their wives. And so, I may say, because of the hardness of their hearts he suffered them still to retain persons in servitude, but he made the laws very stringent, so as almost to prevent it. Among other repressive regulations, this was one, that when a slave ran away from his master it was contrary to law for any one to assist in sending him back again; and with such a law as that standing you can clearly see that nobody need remain a slave, since he could run away if he liked. It was nobody's business—nay, it was a sin for anybody—to force him back again. Now, if a man can go when he likes, his slavery is a very different thing from that which still curses many parts of the earth. But the case stood thus. Sometimes persons who were insolvent, who could not pay, were compelled by the law to give their services to their creditors for a certain number of years, always limited, as you see in this case, to six. A man who had committed theft, instead of putting the country to the expense of a prison, was sometimes fined for his theft sevenfold; and if he had no money he was placed in servitude till he had bought himself free again, an institution not altogether indefensible, I think, and having a good deal of rough

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justice about it. Sometimes a person who was extremely poor would sell his services, for the six years which are here prescribed, to some wealthy person, who was bound to house him, clothe him, and feed him; very much like a system which still obtains in some parts of our own country, where a person's services are hired for the year, with so much of nourishment to be given, and so much of wage. Well, the law here says that if a man should have sold himself, or by insolvency should have come to be sold to his master, at the end of six years he might go free. He was quite free to leave his master's house and go whither he pleased. But it seems that the servitude was so exceedingly light, and, indeed, was so much for the benefit of the person in it, that frequently men would not go free. They preferred to continue as they were, servants to their masters. Now, as it was not desirable that this should often be the case, and as, if it were permitted, oppressive masters might sometimes frighten a servant into such an agreement, the law was made that in such a case the matter must be brought before the judges, and before them the man must say *plainly*—note that word—he must say it very distinctly and plainly, so that there was no doubt about it, that it really was his wish not to accept his liberty, but to remain as he was; and then, after he had stated his desire, and given as his reason that he loved his master, and loved the children, and the wife that he had obtained in his service, his ear was to be pierced against the door of the house. This ceremony was intended to put a little difficulty in the way, that he might hesitate and say, “No, I won't agree to that,” and so might, as was most proper, go free. But if he agreed to that somewhat painful ceremony, and if he declared before the judges that it was his own act and deed, then he was to remain the servant of his chosen master as long as he lived.

We are going to use this as a type, and get some moral out of it, by God's blessing. And the first use is this. Men are by nature the slaves of sin. Some are the slaves of drunkenness, some of lasciviousness, some of covetousness, some of sloth; but there are generally times in men's lives when they have an opportunity of breaking loose. There will happen providential changes which take them away from old companions, and so give them a little hope of liberty, or there will come times of sickness, which take them away from temptation, and give them opportunities for thought. Above all, seasons will occur when conscience is set to work by the faithful preaching of the Word, and when the man pulls himself up, and questions his spirit thus:—“Which shall it be? I have been a servant of the devil, but here is an opportunity of getting free. Shall I give up this sin? Shall I pray God to give me grace to break right away, and become a new man; or shall I not?” Such a time may happen to some sinner here. I pray you, dear friend, do not slight it, because these times may not often come; and coming and being wilfully refused, they may never return to you. If you are resolved to be the slave of your passions, then your passions will indeed enslave you. If you are content to be a slave of the cup, you shall find that the cup will hold you by its fascinations as fast as captive in fetters of brass. If you are willing to be the slave of unbelief and of the pleasures of the flesh, you will find that they

will fasten you as with bands of steel, and hold you down for ever. There are times when men might get free, their prison-door is for the moment on the latch. "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," cries Agrippa. Felix trembles, and resolves to hear more of this matter. Many others in the same condition have been all but free; but they have deliberately preferred to remain as they were, and the result has been that sin has bored their ear, and from that day forward they have seldom been troubled by conscience. They have sinned with impunity. The descending scale to hell has grown more and more rapid, and they have glided down it with ever-increasing pace. Have I not seen some such, for whom I hoped better things? The evil spirit went out of them and left them for a while; and oh, if grace had come and occupied the house, that evil spirit would never have returned; but they beckoned back that evil spirit, and he came with seven other devils more wicked than himself, and the last end of these once hopeful persons has become worse than the first. Slave of sin, will you be free? Your six years are up to-night. Will you be free? The Spirit of God will help you to break every chain; the Redeemer will snap your fetters: are you ready for liberty? Or does your heart deliberately choose to abide under the bondage of Satan? If so, take heed. That aul of habit may bore your ear, and then you will be beyond all hope of reformation, the victim of yourself, the slave of your sins, the idolater of your own belly, the abject menial of your own passions. "He that would be free himself must break the chain," is the old saying, but I will improve it,—he that would be free must cry to Christ to break the chain; but if he would not have it broken, and hugs his bonds, then on his own head be his blood.

Christian man, the lesson to you is this. Since the servants of Satan love their master so well, how well ought you to love yours! and since they will cling to his service, even when it brings misery into their homes, disease into their bodies, aches into their heads, redness into their eyes, and poverty into their purses, oh, can you ever think of leaving your good and blessed Master, whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light? If they follow Satan into hell, surely you may well say—

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I'll follow where he goes."

They are the willing servants of Satan; be ye, with more than equal ardour, the willing servants of Christ.

Our text reads us a second lesson, namely, this. In the forty-first Psalm, in the sixth verse, you will find the expression used by our Lord, or by David in prophecy personifying our Lord, "Mine ear hast thou opened," or "Mine ear hast thou digged." Jesus Christ is here, in all probability, speaking of himself as being for ever, for our sakes, the willing servant of God. Let us just dwell on that a moment. Ages ago, long ere the things which are seen had begun to exist, Jesus had entered into covenant with his Father that he would become the servant of servants for our sakes. All through the long ages he never started back from that compact. Though the Saviour knew the price of pardon was his blood, his pity ne'er withdrew, for his ear had been pierced. He had become for our sakes the lifelong servant of God.

He loved his spouse, the church. He loved his dear sons, his children whom he foresaw when he looked through the future ages, and he would not go out free. Our insolvency had made us slaves, and Christ became a servant in our stead. When he came to Bethlehem's manger, then it was that his ear was pierced indeed; for Paul quotes as a parallel expression—"A body hast thou prepared me." He was bound to God's service when he was found in fashion as a man, for then he "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." When he came to the waters of baptism at Jordan, and said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," then did he, as it were, go before the judges and say plainly that he loved the Master, whom he was bound to serve, loved his spouse, the church, and loved her little ones, and would for their sakes be a servant for ever. When he stood foot to foot with Satan in the wilderness the arch-fiend offered to him all the kingdoms of this world, and why did he not accept them? Because he preferred a cross to a crown, for his ear was bored. Afterwards the people, in the height of his popularity, offered him a crown, but he hid himself away from them. And why? Because he came to suffer, not to reign; his ear was bored for redemption's work, and he was straitened until he had accomplished it. In the Garden, when the bloody sweat fell from his face, and he said, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," why did he not put away that cup? If it had pleased him he might have applied for twelve legions of angels, and they would have come to the rescue; why did he not summon that celestial body-guard? Was it not because he had wholly surrendered himself to the service of our salvation? Before his judges he might have saved himself. Why did he not? One word when he was before Pilate would have broken the spell of prophecy, but why like a sheep before her shearers was he dumb? Why did he give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to those that plucked off the hair? Why did he condescend to die, and actually upon the cross pour out his heart's blood? It was all because he had undertaken for us, and he would go through. His ear was bored; he could not and he would not leave his dearly beloved church.

"Yea, said his love, for her I'll go
Through all the depths of pain and woe;
And on the cross will even dare
The bitter pangs of death to bear."

He would not accept deliverance though he might have done so. "He saved others, himself he could not save."

Now, hear it, ye believers! If Jesus would not go free from his blessed undertaking, will you ever desire to go free from the service of his love? Since he pushed onwards till he said, "It is finished," will not his love by God's Holy Spirit inspire you to push forward till you can say, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"? Can you go back when Jesus goes before you? Can you think of retreating? Can desertion or apostasy be regarded by you with any other feelings than those of detestation when you see your Master bound to the gibbet of Calvary, to bleed to death and then to lie in the cold grave for your sakes? Will you not say, "Let my ear be bored to his service, even this ear was digged for me"?

Let these observations stand as the preface for our sermon; for my discourse, though I will try to make it brief, deals with ourselves, in an earnest fashion. Brethren in Christ, I think I speak for all of you who love Jesus, when I say,—we are willing to undertake to-night perpetual service for Christ. To lead you all to renew your dedication I shall speak upon *our choice of perpetual service, and our reasons for making that choice*, and then I shall call you up, and try to pierce your ears with some one of certain sharp auls, which I have here ready for the purpose.

I. First, let us speak upon our CHOICE OF PERPETUAL SERVICE.

The first thing is, *we have the power to go free if we will*. This is a very memorable night to me. Pardon my speaking of myself, I cannot help it. It is exactly twenty-four years this night that I put on the Lord Jesus Christ publicly in baptism, avowing myself to be his servant; and now at this present time I have served him four times six years, and I think he says to me, "You may go free if you will." In effect he says the same to every one of you, "You may go free if you will, I will not hold you in unwilling servitude." There are plenty of places you can go to; there are the world, the flesh, and the devil. For a master you may have either of these three if you choose. Jesus will not hold you against your will. Do you desire to go free, brethren, free from the yoke of Jesus? I can only speak for myself, and you may say "Amen" for yourselves if you wish, but not else. "Blessed be his name," I never wish to be free from his dear yoke. Rather would I say:—

"Oh, to grace how great a debtor,
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my willing heart to thee."

I will speak of him as I find: I wish to serve him not another four and twenty years, but four and twenty million years, yea, and for ever and for ever, for his yoke is easy and his burden is light. It is said of the Hebrews, "If they had been mindful of the country from which they came out, they had opportunity to return," and so have we; but will we return to the land of destruction? Will we go back unto perdition? Will we renounce our Lord? No, by God's grace it cannot be! We are bound for the land of Canaan, and to Canaan we will go. Wandering hearts we have, but grace still holds them fast, and our prayer is:—

"Prone to wander, Lord, we feel it,
Prone to leave the God we love;
Here's our heart, Lord, take and seal it,
Seal it from thy courts above."

Well, then, since we might go free if we would, but wish not to do so, we are willing to declare before the judges—that is, before the public here assembled to-night, who shall be our judges—that, though quite able to go free (we say it plainly and without stammering), *we have not the remotest wish to do so*. If the service of Christ has been a fetter, Lord, put on double fetters. If thy service has been a bond, Lord, tie us up hand and foot, for, to us, bondage to thee is the only perfect liberty. Yes, if it must be so, we will say it here,

"'Tis done! The great transaction's done.
I am my Lord's, and he is mine;
He drew me, and I follow 'on,
Charmed to obey the voice divine."

And we will add the words,

"High heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest hour we bow,
And bliss in death a bond so dear."

We are willing to say it publicly and plainly, and *we are willing to take the consequences too*. Are we? That is the question. If we mean to be Christ's servants for ever, we must expect to have special troubles such as the world knows nothing of. The boring of our ear is a special pain, but both ears are ready for the aul. The Lord's service involves peculiar trials, for he has told us, "Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it." Are we willing to take the purging? What son is there whom his father chasteneth not? Are we willing to take the chastening? Yes, we would deliberately say, "Whatever it is, we will bear it, so long as the Lord will keep us and help us to remain faithful." We dare not run away from his service, would not, could not: and nothing can drive us to abscond from his house or his work, for, exulting in persevering grace, we venture to say, "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" We will bear the boring of the ear. Perhaps it will come in the shape of more reproach from men. Some of us have had a very fair share of that, and have been tolerably well abused up till now, but none of these things move us. Will there be more cruel mockings between here and heaven? No doubt there will. Then let them come and welcome. My solemn personal declaration at this hour is,—

"If on my face for thy dear name
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
For thou'lt remember me.

Do you not say the same, beloved? Will you not serve Christ without any conditions, at all hazards? Will you not follow him through the mire and through the slough, and up the bleak side of the hill, and along the crest of the field where the battle rages most fiercely? Ay, that we will, if but grace be given: if the Holy Ghost will abide in us. Do you not desire to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth? Do you shrink from the supreme sacrifice? Do you not long to abide faithful though all should forsake the truth? Yes, we desire perpetual servitude to Christ, and to bear whatever that involves. I speak the heart of every lover of Christ when I say, we do not want to serve Christ a little, we wish to serve him much; and the more he will give us to do the better we shall love him; ay, and the more he will give us to bear for his dear sake, if he will give us corresponding grace, the more will we rejoice. That is a great life which is greatly useful, or greatly suffering, or greatly laborious for Jesus Christ the Saviour. Do you not feel in your inmost souls that instead of wishing to be set free, you wish to plunge deeper into this blessed bondage,—

to bear in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus, and to be his branded slaves for ever? Is not this the perfect freedom you desire?

So, then, there is the first point,—our choice of perpetual service.

II. Now, secondly, OUR REASONS FOR IT.

A man ought to have a reason for so weighty a decision as this. We have served our Master now for four-and-twenty years and do not want to change, but should like to live with him and die with him and live for ever with him. We speak boldly on a very weighty business. What reasons can we give for such decided language?

Well, first, we can give some reasons connected with himself. The servant in our text who would not accept his liberty, said, "I love my Master." Can we say that? I cannot feel content with merely saying it. It is true, true, true; but if I were to begin to talk of how I love him, or how I ought to love him, I should break down altogether to-night. Even now I choke with emotion. I can feel love in my heart, but my heart is too full for expression. Oh, what a blessed Master he is! Not love him? My whole nature heaves with affection for him. Who can help it? Look at his wounds, and you must love him, if you have been redeemed. Look at the great gash which reached his heart, whence flowed the water and the blood to be of your sin the double cure. Could you fail to love him? I mean him who died for you and bought you, not with silver and gold, but with his own pangs and griefs and bloody sweat and death. Leave him? O Saviour, let us not be such devils as to leave thee, for worse than demons should we be if we could apostatise from such a sweet Master as thou art!

We love our Master, for he has bought us and saved us from the miseries of hell. And we love him because there never was such a Master, so good, so tender, so royal, so inconceivably lovely, so altogether glorious. Our Lord is perfection's self, and the whole universe cannot produce his equal. We cannot now praise the stars, for we have seen the sun. We could not take up with the mean things of earth, for the Lord of heaven has looked upon us, and one glance of his eyes has enamoured us of him for ever and for ever. Want to leave the service of Jesus? By no means. No such wish crosses our soul. Beloved, I am sure you have no desire to change masters; have you? Are you not abundantly well pleased with his treatment of you? When a servant comes up from the country to take a situation in town, if he goes back to the village, his old friends come round him, and they say, "Well, John, how did you find the service? Did your master treat you well? Was the work very hard? Were you well fed and well clothed?" Now, Christian people, I am not going to talk for you, but you shall talk for yourselves, to your friends and kinsfolk, and answer for yourselves their various questions. If you can find any fault with Jesus tell them of it. Say whether he has ever treated you badly, and, if he has, report it to all the world. Do not allow any to be led into a bad service if you have found it to be such. As for me, there was never a worse servant, but never servant had a better master than I have. He has borne with my ill manners, and treated me like one of his own family. I have been at times a dead weight to his household, but he has never given me a rough word.

"My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." To-night I must, even though I be thought egotistical, speak of his lovingkindness towards me. Twenty-four years ago I was a lad in jackets, and I walked into the open river on a cold May day to be baptised into the name of Jesus as timid and timorous a youth as you well might see; but when I rose from that water the fear of man was gone from my mind, I hope never to return. For the first time that night I prayed at the prayer-meeting, and this tongue has never since ceased to talk of his dear love—

"Ere since by faith I saw the stream
His flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."

Now see what my Lord has done for me! If any one had said to me, "Twenty-four years from this time you will preach to a vast crowd, and will have spiritual children whose number cannot be told," I never could have believed it. It would have seemed impossible that such a thing could be. Yet so it is. His right hand has done for me wonderful things, and my heart reverently extols him. Glory be unto his name for ever and for evermore. Leave my Master! Grant, O glorious Lord, that no such base and loathsome thought may even alight upon my breast. No, dear Master, I am thine for ever, let me kiss thy feet again, and be for ever bound to thee by new cords of love.

Well, my brother, the Lord has treated you kindly, has he not? Come, speak for yourselves. You could rise and tell stories, in their own way, equally as remarkable as mine, and you could wind each one up by saying, "I love my Master. I cannot but love him."

The servant in our text, who would not go free, plainly declared that he loved his wife, so that there are reasons connected not only with his Master, but with those in his Master's house, which detain each servant of Jesus in happy bondage. Beloved, some of us could not leave Jesus, not only because of what he is, but because of some that are very dear to us who are in his service. How could I leave my mother's God? How could I leave my father's God, my grandfather's God, my great-grandfather's God? My brother, how could I leave your God, to be separated from you, whom I have loved so long, so well? * Husband, tender and affectionate, could you leave your wife's God? Wife, could you forsake the God of those dear babes in heaven? They are resting there on the breast of Jesus, and you hope to see them soon, do you not love Jesus for the sake of those who once nestled in your bosom? Ay, and it is not merely earthly relationship that binds us thus, but we love all the people of God, because of our relationship in Christ. Truly we can say of his church, "Here my best friends, my kindred dwell." Some of the dearest associations we have ever formed commenced at the foot of the cross. Our best friends are those with whom we go up to the house of God in company. Why, most of the friends that some of us have on earth we won through our being one in Jesus Christ; and we mean to stand fast for the

* Here the preacher turned to his brother, Mr. J. A. Spurgeon, who was upon the platform with him.

grand old cause, and the old gospel, for the sake not only of Christ but of his people.

"Now, for my friends and brethren's sake,
Peace be in thee, I'll say;
And for the sake of God our Lord
I'll seek thy good alway."

"Because I love my wife and my children," says the man, "I cannot go out free." And so say we.

Besides, let me add, there are some of us who must keep to Christ, because we have children in his family whom we could not leave,— dear ones who first learned of Christ from us. Many in this place were first led to the Lord by our teaching, and by our prayers. We could not run away from them, their loving prayers hold us fast. In them the Lord has hold upon us by new ties. You do not find a woman leave her husband, as a rule, when there are seven or eight little children at home; no, and no man can leave Christ who has been spiritually fruitful; the seals of his ministry seal anew the indentures which bind him to his Lord. The successful pastor will be kept faithful; he must stand fast by the church, and by the church's Head, when there are children begotten unto him by the power of the Holy Ghost through faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are reasons also why we cannot forsake our Lord which arise out of ourselves; and the first is that reason which Peter felt to be so powerful. The Master said, "Will ye also go away?" Peter answered by another question. He said, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Ah, Christian, there is no way for you but to go straight on to heaven, for where would you go? Where *could* you go else? Some of us are so thoroughly identified with Jesus and his gospel that the world would have nothing to do with us if we were to ask its friendship. We are committed too much to our Master ever to reckon upon receiving love and friendship from his foes. We have given the world too many slaps in the face to be forgiven by it. We have crossed the Rubicon, and there remains nothing for us but victory or death. Where could a poor wretch hide, who has been a well-known minister of the gospel, should he apostatise? Where could he dwell? Should he journey to the ends of the earth some would remember his name and say, "Hast thou apostatised?" In the remotest regions of the globe some would jeeringly say to him, "Hast thou fallen, hast thou gone aside?" Where could we go, then? We *must* cleave to Christ. It is of necessity we must.

And *why* should we go? Come, brethren, can you find any reason why we should leave Jesus Christ? Can you imagine one? As my imaginative faculty is not strong enough I will not attempt it. I can see a million reasons for cleaving to him, but not a pretence of a reason for leaving him.

And *when* should we leave him, if we must leave him? Leave him while we are young? It is then that we need him to be the guide of our youth. Leave him when we are in middle life? Why, then it is we want him to help us to bear our cross, lest we sink under our daily load. Leave him in old age? Ah, no! It is then we require him to cheer our declining hours. Leave him in life? How

could we live without him? Leave him in death? How could we die without him? No, we must cling to him: we must follow him whithersoever he goeth.

These are a few of the reasons why we would be his servants for ever.

III. In the last place, I want to bore your ear.

Do you mean to be bound for life? Christians, do you really mean it? Come, sit ye down and count the cost, and, if ye mean it, come and welcome! There is the standard! The blood-red cross waves at the top of it, will you now in cool blood enlist for life? Every man who wishes to desert may go home. Christ wants no press-men. Ho, ye volunteers! Come hither! We want you, and none but you. The Lord desires no slaves to dishonour his camp. Cowards, you may go! Double-minded men, ye may get to your tents! But what say you, ye true believers? Will you cleave to him and his cause? Do you leap forward and say, "Never can we separate from Jesus; we give ourselves to him for life, for death, for time, and for eternity. We are his altogether and for ever"? Come, then, and have your ears bored.

And, first, let them be bored with the sharp aul of *the Saviour's sufferings*. No story wrings a Christian's heart with such anguish as the griefs and woes of Christ. We preached the other morning upon the crown of thorns, and it was our task to bring before you the different items of our Saviour's griefs; now, whenever you are hearing about him, you ought to say within yourself, "Ah, he is piercing my ear, he is fastening me to his cross, he is marking me for himself, I cannot forsake my bleeding Lord. His wounds attract me. I fly to him afresh. When the world would fain draw me off from Jesus, I find a central force drawing me back to his dear heart. I must be Christ's. His sufferings have won me. The bleeding Lamb enthralls me. I am his, and his for ever." That is one way of marking the ear.

Next, let your ear be fastened by *the truth*, so that you are determined to hear only the gospel. The gospel ought to monopolise the believer's ear. Some professors can hear any stuff in all the world if it is prettily put, and so long as the man is a "clever" man (I think that is the word). When they hear a preacher of whom they can say, "He is very clever, very clever!" they appear perfectly satisfied, whether the man's doctrine is good or bad. Now is not this foolishness? What does it matter about a man's being clever? The devil is clever; and every great thief is clever. There is nothing in cleverness to gain the approval of a spiritual mind. I pray God to give every one of you an ear that will not hear false doctrine. I do not think we ought to blame a man who gets up and goes out of a place of worship when he hears the truth of God denied; I think we ought far rather to commend him. There is a great deal of that soft, willow-pattern style of man about now-a-days. Let a man talk loudly and prettily, and many hearers will believe anything he says. Dear brethren, we must have discernment, or we shall be found aiding and abetting error. "My sheep," says Christ, "hear my voice, and a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." Now, if you mean to be Christ's for ever, you must not allow that ear of yours to hear bad doctrine. You must take care that, knowing the truth

you hold to it, and renounce every false way. Do not make your ear a common sewer, into which foul doctrine may be poured, in the hope that afterwards Jesus Christ may make it clean again. "Take care what ye hear" is one of the precepts of infinite wisdom; and let it not fail to impress your souls.

Furthermore, if you really give yourself to Christ, you must have your ear opened to hear and obey the whispers of *the Spirit of God*, so that you yield to his teaching, and to his teaching only. I am afraid some Christians give their ears to an eminent preacher, and follow him whichever way he goes, very much to their own injury. The right thing is to yield to the Spirit of God. Which way the Scripture goes—that is the way for you to go; and though we, or an angel from heaven, preach to you any other gospel than what this sacred book contains—though I trust we may not be accursed if we do it in ignorance—yet, certainly, *you* will be accursed if, knowing it to be wrong, you follow us in preference to following the Lord. Let your ear be open to the faintest monitions of the Holy Spirit. There would be an end to all the sects and divisions in the church if all Christians were willing to do what the Holy Spirit tells them. Alas! there are many people who do not want to know too much of the mind of God. What the Bible says is no great concern of theirs, because, perhaps, that may not say quite the same thing as the Prayer Book, and they had rather not be disturbed in their minds. Perhaps the Bible may not confirm all the doctrines of their sect, and therefore they leave it unread, for they had rather not be perplexed. Oh, brethren, let names, and parties, and prayer-books, and catechisms, and everything else go to the dogs sooner than one word of Jesus shall be neglected. Let us give ourselves up to the Spirit of God and to the teaching of his own Word, for as Christ's servants our ears have been pierced. Your ear has thus been bored with three auls, and none of them has pained you.

Many young women have had their ears pierced; I do not know whether it hurt them or not. I do not suppose that the operation described in the text pained the man much, though there was a little blood lost, perhaps, when the aul went through the lobe of the ear. I will tell you what some would do with their ears if they were pierced; I would not do it with mine, but an oriental would be sure to do it. What would he do? Why, put a ring in it, and hang it with ornaments. When a Christian man has his ears bored to belong to Christ for ever and ever, God will be sure to put a jewel in it for him. And what jewels ought to hang in the Christian's ear? Why, the jewel of obedience. Practise the doctrine which your ear has heard. Then there would follow the diamond of joy; the ear which belongs wholly to Jesus will be sure to be adorned with the jewel of the Spirit, which is joy. If we give our heart up to Christ he will hang in our ear many costly gems of knowledge,—we shall know the deep things of God when we are willing to learn them. The ear being pierced, we shall sit like children at Jesu's feet and learn of him; and rubies and emeralds and pearls, such as deep-sea fisheries never knew, shall belong to us; and our ear will be hung with the priceless gem of "quickness of understanding in the fear of the Lord." "He wakeneth me morning by morning; he opened my ear to hear as the learned." There, too, will hang that

precious gem of separation from the world. The distinguishing mark of "Holiness unto the Lord" will be in the Christian's ear like a precious jewel of inestimable price. When they were selling the Duke of Brunswick's gems the other day, they found that ever so many of them were not what they were supposed to be; he had guarded them with great care, and scarcely had enjoyed a happy hour in his great anxiety for his valuables, and yet some of them were not worth the keeping. If you will give yourself to Christ, and if your ear be bored, these precious graces which I have mentioned will be pearls of exceeding great price, such as angels might envy you the wearing of. There, young women, put these jewels in your ears, and nobody will blame you for wearing such goodly ornaments. There, good man, you also may go with rings in your ears if these are the rings and these are the gems, and you will not be thought foppish and singular. May the Lord give them to you. As you come to the communion table, come with this feeling: "I am going there to renew my covenant, I have been a Christian these many years, I love my Lord better than ever I did, and I will, therefore, dedicate myself to him again."

And now, you unconverted people, do you think I have spoken the truth? If my Master had behaved badly to me I would have run away from him long ago; I would not stand here to tell you that he was a good Master if he were not; but, since he is so good, oh that you would say, "I would like to be in his service." Have you such a desire? then, dear heart, remember his own words, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." If thou art willing to be his, he is willing to have thee. He is so great a Prince that he can maintain an endless company of servants without embarrassing himself. There was never a soul that wanted Christ but what Christ wanted that soul. Depend upon it, if you go to him he will enrol you among his household retainers, and allot you an honourable portion day by day. Seeking sinner, believe in Jesus and live. God grant you grace for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
John vi. 37 to end of Chapter.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—660, 658, 663.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

STEPHEN'S DEATH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 24TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."—Acts vii. 59, 60.

It is of the greatest service to us all to be reminded that our life is but a vapour, which appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away. Through forgetfulness of this worldlings live at ease, and Christians walk carelessly. Unless we watch for the Lord's coming, worldliness soon eats into our spirit as doth a canker. If thou hast this world's riches, believer, remember that this is not thy rest, and set not too great a store by its comforts. If, on the other hand, thou dwellest in straitness, and art burdened with poverty, be not too much depressed thereby, for these light afflictions are but for a moment, and are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Look upon the things that are as though they were not. Remember you are a part of a great procession which is always moving by; others come and go before your own eyes, you see them, and they disappear, and you yourself are moving onward to another and more real world. "Tis greatly wise to talk with our last hours," to give a rehearsal of our departure, and to be prepared to stand before the great tribunal of the judgment. Our duty is to trim our lamps against the time when the Bridegroom comes; we are called upon to stand always ready, waiting for the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, or else for the summons which shall tell us that the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern, that the body must return to the earth as it was, and the spirit unto God who gave it.

This death scene of Stephen's may aid our meditations, while, by the help of the Holy Spirit, we cast our minds forward to the time when we also must fall asleep. This is the only martyrdom which is recorded in the New Testament in detail, the Holy Ghost foreseeing that there would be martyrdoms enough before the church's history
No. 1,175.

would end, and that we should never lack memorials such as those with which Foxe's Martyrology and works of the like order supply us. It is equally remarkable that this is the only death scene in the New Testament which has been described at length, with the exception of our Lord's. Of course we are told of the deaths of other saints, and facts relating thereto are mentioned, but what they said when they died, and how they felt in passing out of the world, are left unrecorded, probably because the Holy Spirit knew that we should never lack for holy death-beds and triumphant departures. These he well knew would be everyday facts to the people of God. Perhaps, moreover, the Holy Spirit would have us gather from his silence that he would not have us attach so much importance to the manner of men's deaths as to the character of their lives. To live like Jesus most nearly concerns us; a triumphant death may be the crown, but a holy life is the head that must wear it. To obey our Lord's commands during our life is our most pressing business; we may leave the testimony of death to be given us in the selfsame hour. We shall have dying grace in dying moments; and at this present our chief business is to obtain the grace which will enable us to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. However, as we have this one case of Stephen given us at full length, we should prize it the more highly, and study it the more carefully, because it is the only one. Let us do so this morning.

There are three things upon which I shall speak:—*The general character of Stephen's death; secondly, its most notable peculiarity; and thirdly, things desirable in reference to death suggested to us by Stephen's departure.*

I. Let us look at Stephen's death, and notice ITS GENERAL CHARACTER. It strikes us at once that *it happened in the very midst of his service.* He had been appointed an officer of the church at Jerusalem, to see that the alms were distributed properly amongst the poor, especially amongst the Grecian widows. He discharged his duty to the satisfaction of the whole church, and thereby he did most useful service, for it gave the apostles opportunity to give themselves wholly to their true work, namely, that of preaching and prayer, and it is no small matter to be able to bear a burden for another if he is thereby set free for more eminent service than we could ourselves perform. If it be so that I cannot preach myself, yet if I can take away from one who does preach certain cares which burden him, if I thus enable him to preach the more and the better, I am virtually preaching myself. The care which Stephen exercised over the poor tended also to prevent heartburning and division, and this was a result of no mean order. But, not content with being a deacon, Stephen began to minister in holy things as a speaker of the word, and that with great power, for he was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. He stands forth on the page of the church's history, for the time being, as quite a leading spirit; so much so, indeed, that the enemies of the gospel recognised his prominent usefulness, and made him the object of their fiercest opposition, for they generally rage most against those who are doing most good. Stephen stood in the front rank of the Lord's host, and yet he was taken away! "A mystery," say some; "A great privilege," say I.

My brethren, who desires to be removed at any other time? Is it not well to die in harness while yet you are useful? Who wants to linger till he becomes a burden rather than a help? If we are called to depart in the middle of service we must submit to it thankfully, and may even wish to have it said of us, he did

"His body with his charge lay down,
And ceased at once to work and live."

He was removed in the very prime of his usefulness, just when many were being converted by his ministry, when, through his faith, miracles were being wrought on all sides, when he seemed, indeed, to be necessary to the church. And is not this well? Well, first, that God should teach his people how much he can do by a man whom he chooses; well, next, that he should show them that he is not dependent upon any man, but can do his work even without the choicest labourer in his vineyard. If our life can teach one lesson, and when that is taught, if our death can teach another, it is well to live and well to die, and far more desirable than to tarry long and take one's flight in the dreary winter of declining influence. Let me be reaped, if I may venture on a choice, when my ministry shall be like the wheat in Pharaoh's dream, with seven ears rank and good, and not in a time when the east wind has shrivelled me into barrenness. If God be glorified by our removal, is it not well? And may he not be more than ordinarily glorified when he lays us aside in order to show his church that he can do without his servants, or can raise up others in their stead? Happy is that messenger whose absence as well as his presence fulfils his Master's will.

But *Stephen's death was painful, and attended with much that flesh and blood would dread*. He died not surrounded by weeping friends, but by enemies who gnashed their teeth; no holy hymn made glad his death chamber, but the shouts and outcries of a maddened throng rang in his ears. For him no downy pillow, but the hard and cruel rocks; battered and bruised by a whirlwind of stones he laid him down to sleep, and woke up in the bosom of his Lord. Now, brethren, this is all the more for our comfort, because if he died in perfect peace, nay, in joy and triumph, how much more may we hope to depart in peace! Since we shall not have these grim attendants upon our departing hours, may we not hope that we shall be sustained and buoyed up by the presence of our Lord and Master even as he was, and grace will be made perfect in our weakness? Every circumstance tells on our side by way of comfort. If he slept amidst a storm of stones, how may we hope to fall asleep right peacefully, in the same faith in Jesus, when the saints are gathered around our bed to bid us farewell!

More particularly, however, I want to call your attention to the fact that *Stephen's departing moments were calm, peaceful, confident, joyous*. He never flinched while he was addressing that infuriated audience. He told them the plain truth, with as much quiet deliberation as if he had been gratifying them with a pleasing discourse. When they grew angry he was not afraid; his lip did not quiver; he did not retract or soften down a single expression, but cut them to the heart with even more fidelity. With the courage of a man of God, his face was set as

a flint. Knowing that he was now preaching his last sermon, he used the sharp two-edged sword of the word, piercing into their very souls. Little cared he how they frowned; nothing was he abashed when they gnashed their teeth. He was as calm as the opened heaven above him, and continued so though they hurried him out of the city. When they had dragged him outside the gate, and stripped off their clothes to carry out his execution, he did not let fall a single timorous word or trembling cry; he stood up and committed his soul to God with calmness, and when the first murderous stones felled him to the earth he rose to his knees, still not to ask for pity, nor to utter a craven cry, but to plead with his Lord for mercy upon his assailants; then, closing his eyes like a child tired out with the sport of a long summer's day, and drops asleep upon its mother's lap, "he fell asleep." Believe, then, O Christian, that if you abide in Christ, the like will be the case with you. You shall be undisturbed at the premonitions of decay; when the physician shakes his head your heart shall not fail; when friends look sad you will not share their sorrow. We wept when we were born though all around us smiled; so shall we smile when we die while all around us weep. The dying Christian is often the only calm and composed person in all the group which fills the chamber from which he ascends to heaven. Talking of what he enjoys and expects, he glides gently into glory. Why should we expect it to be otherwise? Stephen's God is our God; Stephen's faith we already possess in its germ, and we may have it in the same degree; the Holy Spirit dwells in us even as he did in Stephen, and if he puts not forth the same energy, what doth hinder him but our unbelief? Getting more faith we shall enjoy the same tranquil repose of spirit when our appointed hour shall come. Brethren, let us not fear death, but descend Jordan's shelving bank without the slightest dismay.

Some other points about Stephen's departure I beg you to notice,—points relating to the state of his mind. *His mind was in a very elevated condition.* Here let us first remark *his intense sympathy with God.* All through that long speech of his you see that his soul is taken up with his God, and the treatment which he had received from Israel. He does not speak against his countrymen from any ill will, but he seems to take them very little into consideration; his God absorbs all his thoughts; and he tells how his God had sent Joseph, but his brethren persecuted him; his God had sent Moses, but they rebelled against him; his God had now sent Jesus, and they had been his betrayers and murderers. He had pity upon them in his heart, that is clearly seen in his dying prayer for them, but still his main feeling is sympathy with God in the rebellions which he had endured from the ungodly. Surely this is the mind which possesses the saints in heaven. I see, as I read Stephen's speech, that he regarded impenitent sinners from the standpoint of the saints above, who will be so taken up in sympathy with God, and the righteousness of his government, that the doom of the finally rebellious will cause them no pain. The triumph of right over wilful wrong, of holiness over the foulest and most wanton sin, of justice over the ingratitude which made light of redeeming love, will clear the soul of all emotion but that which rejoices in every act of the Most High, because it is and must

be right. I know how easily this remark may be misrepresented, still it is true, and let it stand.

Notice, too, how *Stephen's mind clung only to that which is purely spiritual*. All ritualism was clean gone from him. I dare say at one time Stephen felt a great reverence for the temple; the first Jewish Christians still continued to feel a measure of that awe of the temple which, as Jews, they had formerly indulged; but Stephen says, "Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord, or what is the place of my rest?" It is noteworthy how the saints, when they are near to die, make very little of what others make a great deal of. What is ritual to a dying man?—a man with his eyes opened, looking into the future, and about to meet his God? Sacraments are poor supports in the dying hour. Priestcraft, where is it? The reed has snapped beneath the weight of a burdened conscience, and the tremendous realities of death and judgment. The peculiar form of worship which a man contended for in health, and the little specialities of doctrines which he made much of aforetime, will seem little in comparison with the great spiritual essentials, when the soul is approaching the presence chamber of the Eternal. The saint in death is growingly spiritual, for he is nearing the land of spirits, and that city of which John said, "I saw no temple therein." Brethren, it is a grand thing to grow in spiritual religion till you break the eggshell of form, and shake it off; for the outward fashion of ceremonies, and even of simplicities, is too often to men what the eggshell is to the living bird; and when the soul awakens into the highest forms of life we chip and break that shell, and leave our former bondage. Stephen came right away from those superstitious reverences which still cast their blight over many Christians, and worshipped God, who is a spirit, in spirit and in truth.

It is most clear *that he rose beyond all fear of men*. They grin at him, they howl at him, but what matters that to him? He will be put to a blasphemer's death outside the city by the hands of cruel men; but that daunts him not. His face glows with joy unspeakable, he looks not like a man hurried to his execution, but as one on the way to a wedding. He looks like an immortal angel rather than a man condemned to die. Ah, brethren, and so will it be with all the faithful! To-day we fear man, who is but a worm; to-day we are so weak as to be swayed by the estimation of our fellows, and we listen to kindly voices, which counsel us to speak with bated breath upon certain points, lest we grieve this one or that; but the fitter we are for heaven the more we scorn all compromise, and feel that for truth, for God, for Christ, we must speak out, even if we die, for who are we that we should be afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man that is but a worm? It is a blessed thing if this shall be growingly our condition.

At the same time *Stephen was free from all cares*. He was a deacon, but he does not say, "What will those poor people do? How will the widows fare? Who will care for the orphans?" He does not even say, "What will the apostles do now that I can no longer take the

labour from off their shoulders?" Not a word of it. He sees heaven opened, and thinks little of the church below, love it though he does with all his heart. He trusts the church militant with her Captain; he is called to the church triumphant. He hears the trumpet sound, "Up and away," and lo, he answers to the summons. Happy men who can thus cast off their cares, and enter into rest. Why should it not be thus with us? Why, like Martha, do we allow our much serving to cumber us? Our Lord managed his church well enough before we were born: he will not be at a loss because he has called us home, and therefore we need not trouble ourselves as though we were all-important, and the church would pine for lack of us.

At the same time, *Stephen had no resentments*. That was a sweet prayer of his, "Lay not this sin to their charge." Just as Daniel before Belshazzar saw the scale and saw Belshazzar weighed in it and found wanting, so Stephen saw the balances of justice, and this murder of his, like a great weight, about to be placed in the scale against the raging Jews, and he cried, "Lord, cast not this sin into the balance." He could not say, as the Saviour did, "They know not what they do," for they did know it, and had been troubled by his speech, so that they stopped their ears, to hear no more; but he pleads for them as far as truth would permit him, while breathing out his soul. Every child of God ought to lay aside all resentments at once, or rather he should never have any. We are to carry in our hearts no remembrance of ill, but to live every day freely forgiving, as we are every day freely forgiven: but as we get nearer to heaven there must be growing love to those who hate us, for so shall we prove that we have been made ready for the skies.

To close up this description of his death, *Stephen died like a conqueror*. His name was *Stephanos*, or crown, and truly that day he not only received a crown, but he became the crown of the church as her first martyr. He was the conqueror, not his enemies. They stoned his body, but his soul had vanquished them. It was not in their power to move him; his quiet look defied their fury. He went home to his God to hear it said, "Servant of God, well done," and in nothing had his foes despoiled him on the way thither. He was more than a conqueror through him that loved him.

These are some of the characteristics of Stephen's departure, and I trust that in our measure they may be ours. God grant them to us, and we will give him all the glory.

II. Now I call your attention to a very interesting point,—THE MOST NOTABLE PECULIARITY OF STEPHEN'S DEATH. It was notable for this one point, that it was full of Jesus,—and full of Jesus in four ways; Jesus was *seen, invoked, trusted, and imitated*.

First, *the Lord Jesus was seen*. The martyr looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. At first he was probably in the council hall of the Sanhedrim, but the vision seemed to divide the roof, to roll away the firmament, and set open the gates of heaven, so that into its innermost chambers the anointed eye was able to gaze. It is said he saw *the Son of Man*. Now this is the only place in Scripture where Jesus is called the Son of Man by any one but himself. He frequently called

himself the Son of Man, that was indeed his common name for himself, but his disciples did not call him so. Perhaps the glory of the rejected Messiah as man was the peculiar thought which was to be conveyed to Stephen's mind, to assure him that as the despised Lord had at length triumphed, so also should his persecuted servant. At all times it is a gladsome sight to see the representative man exalted to the throne of God, but it was peculiarly suitable for this occasion, for the Lord himself had warned his enemies, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power." He had spoken those words to the very men who now heard Stephen bear witness that it was even so. Stephen saw his Lord *standing*; now our Lord is generally described as sitting, but it was as if the sympathising Lord had risen up to draw near to his suffering servant, eager both to sustain him and to receive him when the conflict was over. Jesus rose from the throne to gaze upon himself suffering again in the person of one of his beloved members. The place occupied by the Lord was "at the right hand of God." Stephen distinctly saw the ineffable brightness of eternal glory, which no human eye can see until strengthened by superior grace, and amid that glory he saw the Son of Man in the place of love, power, and honour, worshipped and adored. Now, when we come to die, dear friends, we may not, perhaps, expect with these eyes to see what Stephen saw, but faith has a grand realising power. The fact that Jesus is enthroned is always the same, and so long as we are sure that he is at the right hand of God, it little matters whether we see him with our natural eyes, for faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. Brethren, if your faith shall be strong when you come to die, as doubtless it will be, you will have a sight and sense of Jesus in his manhood at the right hand of God, and this will effectually take away from you all fear of death; for you will feel, "If the man Christ is there, I, being already represented by him, shall also be there; I shall rise from the dead; I shall sit at the right hand of the Father; his eternal power and Godhead will raise me up to be where he is, for has he not said—"I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." I will, however, venture further. I am convinced, from my own observation, that not to a few, but to many dying saints, something more is given than the realisations of faith. Much more frequently than we suppose, supernatural glimpses of the divine splendour are vouchsafed to the saints in the hour of their departure. I have heard persons comparatively uninstructed, and certainly unimaginative, speak of what they have seen in their last hour, in such a way, that I am certain they never borrowed the expressions from books, but must have seen what they described. There has been a freshness about their descriptions which has convinced me they did see what they assured me they beheld; and, moreover, the joy which has resulted from it, the acquiescence in the divine will, the patience with which they have borne suffering, have gone far to prove that they were not under the influence of an idle imagination, but were really enabled to look within the veil. The flesh in its weakness becomes, if I may so say, a rarefied medium; the mists are blown away, the obscuring veil grows thinner, disease makes rents in it, and through the thin places and the rents

the heavenly glory shines. Oh, how little will a man fear death, or care about pain, if he expects to breathe out his soul on a better Pisgah than Moses ever climbed! Well did we sing just now—I am sure I sang it with all my heart—

“Oh, if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul would stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through death's iron gate,
Nor fear the terror as she passed.”

Now this model departure, which is given in Scripture as a type of Christian deaths, has this for its ensign, that Christ was visible; and such shall be the character of our departure, if through faith we are one with Jesus; therefore, let us not fear.

Next, notice that *Jesus was invoked*, for that is the meaning of the text. “They stoned Stephen, calling upon,” or invoking, “and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Dying Christians are not troubled with questions as to the deity of Christ. Dear friends, Unitarianism may do to live with, but it will not do to die with, at least for us. At such a time we need an almighty and divine Saviour; we want “God over all, blessed for ever” to come to our rescue in the solemn article. So Stephen called upon Jesus, and worshipped him. He makes no mention of any other intercessor. O martyr of Christ, why didst thou not cry, “Ave Maria! Blessed Virgin, succour me!”? Why didst thou not pray to St. Michael and all angels? Ah, no! The abomination of saint and angel worship had not been invented in his day, and if it had been he would have scorned it as one of the foul devices of hell. There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. He invoked Christ, and no one else.

Neither do we find him saying a word as to his good works, and almsdeeds, and sermons, and miracles. No, he invoked the Lord Jesus and leaned on him wholly. Ah, brethren, it is well to live and to die resting wholly upon Jesus. If you lie down to-night and quietly think of your departure, and inquire whether you are ready to die, you will not feel at your ease till your heart stands at the foot of the cross, looking up and viewing the flowing of the Saviour's precious blood, believing humbly that he made your peace with God. There is no right living, or joyful dying, except in invoking Christ.

What next did Stephen do? *He trusted Jesus*, and confided in him only; for we find him saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” He felt that his spirit was about to leave the body to fly into the unknown world. Perhaps a shiver came over him of natural awe at the great mystery, even as it comes over us when we think of being disrobed of the familiar garment of our body; but he placed his unclothed spirit in the hands of Jesus, and his fear and care were over. See, he has quite done with it now! He prays no more for himself, but intercedes for his enemies; and then closes his eyes and falls asleep. This is the simple and sublime art of dying. Once more we take our guilty soul and place it in the dear pierced hand of him who is able to keep it; and then we feel assured that all is safe. The day's work is done, the doors are fastened, the watchman guards the streets; come, let us fall asleep. With Jesus seen, invoked, and trusted, it is sweet to die.

Notice, once again, that in Stephen we see *Jesus imitated*, for the death of Stephen is a reproduction of the death of Jesus; let us hope that ours will be the same. It was so, even in little circumstances. Jesus died without the gate, so did Stephen; Jesus died praying, so did Stephen; Jesus died saying, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;" Stephen cannot approach God absolutely, but he approaches him through the Mediator, and he says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Christ dies pleading for his murderers, so does Stephen—"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Now, if our death shall be a reproduction of the death of Jesus, why need we fear? It has hitherto been sweet to be made like him, and it will still be sweet: even to suffer with him has been delightful, surely it will be joyful to die with him. We are willing to sleep in Jesus' bed, and lie as he did in the bosom of the earth, to arise in his likeness at the resurrection.

Thus you see, dear brethren, that Stephen's death was radiant with the glow of his Lord's brightness. Christ was glorified and reflected in him. None could question whose image and superscription he bore. If our lives shall be of that order, our deaths also shall be of the like character. Let your life be looking unto Jesus, pleading with Jesus, trusting in Jesus, copying Jesus, and then your departing moments will be attended by visions of Jesus, and reproductions of his dying behaviour. As you have been with him in the trials of life, he will be with you in the closing scenes of death. Happy they whose death-bed Jesus makes, and who sleep in Jesus, to be brought with him when he returns to take the kingdom.

III. From Stephen's departure we gather something as to THE KIND OF DEATH WHICH WE MAY WISELY DESIRE. First, it is very desirable that *our death should be of a piece with our life*. Stephen was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost in life, and so was he full of the Holy Ghost in death; Stephen was bold, brave, calm, and composed in life, he is the same amid the falling stones. It is very sad when the reported account of a man's death does not fit in with his life. I am afraid that many funeral sermons have done great mischief by their **flattery**, for persons have very naturally said, "This is very strange, I never knew that the departed person was a saint until I heard this account of his end. Really, when I hear these wonderful things about him,—well, I should not have thought it." No, it will not do to have no character for piety but that which is hurriedly run up in a **few days** of sickness and death. It is ill to die with a jerk, getting as it were upon another line of rails all on a sudden. It is better to glide from one degree of grace to another, and so to glory. We ought to die daily, die every morning before we go down to breakfast, that is to say, we should rehearse it all, so that when we come to die it will be no new thing to us. Death may be the fringe or border of life, but it should be made out of the same piece. A life of clay is not to be joined to a death of gold. We cannot hope to dine with the world and sup with God. We ought to dwell in the house of the Lord every day.

Again, it is most desirable that *death should be the perfecting of our whole career*, the putting of the corner-stone upon the edifice, so that

when nothing else is wanted to complete the man's labours he falls asleep. Dear brethren, is it so with you? Suppose you were to die this morning in the pew, would your life be a complete life, or would it be like a broken column snapped off in the centre? Why, there are some who even in their business lives have left many needful things undone; for instance, they have not made their wills yet, and will cause much sorrow to wife and children through their neglect. Some Christian people do not keep their worldly affairs in proper order, but are lax, disorderly, and slovenly, so that if they were to die, there would be many things because of which they would feel loathe to die. Mr. Whitfield used to say when he went to bed at night, "I have not left even a pair of gloves out of their place: if I die to-night, all my affairs, for time and eternity, are in order." That is the best way to live; so that, let death come when it may, at midnight, cock-crowing, or midday, it will be a desirable *finis* to a book of which we have written the last line; we have finished our course, and served our generation, and our falling asleep is the fit conclusion of the matter.

May our death not be one of a kind which needs flurry and hot haste to make the man ready. There are people in the world who, if they were going off by train and knew of it a month beforehand, would be all in a fever an hour before they started; though they know the time the train starts, they cannot arrive a few minutes before by any means, but rush in just as the bell rings, and leap into a carriage only in time to save the train. Some die in that fashion, as if they had so much to do and were in such a hurry; and besides, had so little grace that they could be only saved so as by fire. When worldly Christians die, there is a deal to be done to pack up, and get ready for departing; but a true Christian stands with his loins girded; he knows he has to travel; he does not know exactly when, but he stands with his staff in his hand. He knows the Bridegroom is soon coming, and he therefore keeps his lamp well trimmed. That is the way to live and the way to die. May the Holy Spirit put us in such a condition, that the angel of death may not summon us unawares, or catch us by surprise; then will going home be nothing out of the common way, but a simple matter. Bengel, the famous commentator, did not wish to die in spiritual parade, with a sensational scene, but to pass away like a person called out to the street door from the midst of business. His prayer was granted. He was revising the proof sheets of his works almost to the moment when he felt the death stroke. Is not this well? Equally desirable was the end of the Venerable Bede, who died as he completed his translation of the gospel of John. "Write quickly," said he, "for it is time for me to return to him who made me." "Dear master," said the pupil, "one sentence is still wanting." "Write quickly," said the venerable man. The young man soon added, "It is finished;" and Bede replied, "Thou hast well said, all is now finished," and he fell asleep. So would I desire to depart, so might every Christian desire; we would make no stir from our daily holiness, we would change our place but not our service; having waited on our Lord at this end of the room, we are called up higher, and we go.

It must be a dreadful thing for a professing Christian to die full of regrets for work neglected and opportunities wasted. It is sad to

have to say, "I must leave my Sunday-school class before I have earnestly warned those dear children to flee from the wrath to come." It would be wretched for me to go home to-day and say, "I have preached my last sermon, but it was not earnest, nor calculated either to glorify God or benefit my fellow-men." Can the end of a wasted life be other than unhappy? Will it not be sorrowful to be called away with work undone and purposes unfulfilled? O my brethren, do not live so as to make it hard to die.

It must also be a sad thing to be taken away unwillingly, plucked like an unripe fruit from the tree. The unripe apple holds fast to its place, and so do many hold hard to their riches, and cleave so fondly to worldly things that it needs a sharp pull to separate them from the world. The ripe fruit adheres but lightly, and when a gentle hand comes to take it, it yields itself freely, as if willing to be gathered, like an apple of gold into a basket of silver. God make you unworldly, and forbid that you should cleave so resolutely to things below as to make death a violence and departure a terror.

Brethren, we would not wish to die so that it should be a matter of question, especially to ourselves, to which place we are going, and yet you will die in that way if you live in that way. If you have no assurance of salvation, do you expect it to come to you on your dying bed? Why, my dear friend, when the pain increases and the brain becomes weary, you are very likely to suffer depression, and therefore you need strong faith to begin with for your own comfort then. Would you like friends to go out of your death-chamber saying, "We hope he is saved, but we stand in doubt concerning him"? Your life should prevent that. Holy Mr. Whitfield, when some one observed, "I should like to hear your dying testimony," said, "No, I shall, in all probability bear no dying testimony." "Why not?" said the other. "Because I am bearing testimony every day while I live, and there will be the less need of it when I die." That seraphic apostle preached up to the last afternoon, and then went upstairs to bed, and died. There was no need for any one to ask, "What did he say when he was dying?" Ah, no; they knew what he said when he was living, and that was a great deal better. Let your testimony in life be such that, whether you speak or not in your last moments, there shall be no question about whose you were nor whom you served.

In conclusion, one would desire to die so that *even our death should be useful*. I feel persuaded that Stephen's death had a great deal to do with Saul's conversion. Have you ever observed the evident influence of Stephen upon Paul? Augustine says, "If Stephen had never prayed, Saul had never preached." I do not say that the death of Stephen converted Saul; far from it; that change was wrought by a divine interposition when Saul was on the road to Damascus; but what he saw in Stephen's martyrdom had made the soil ready to receive the good seed. Saul, in after life, seems to me to be always taking his text from Stephen's sermon. Read that sermon through at home, and see if it is not so. Stephen spoke about the covenant of circumcision, and that was a very favourite topic with Paul. When Paul stood at Athens on Mars' Hill and addressed the Areopagites, he said to them, "God that made heaven and earth dwelleth no,

in temples made with hands,"—almost the identical words which Stephen had quoted, and surely the remembrance of Stephen before the Sanhedrim must have rushed over the apostle's mind at the time. There is yet another passage—and indeed I might carry on the parallel a very long way—where Stephen used the expression, "They received the law by the disposition of angels," an idea peculiar to Paul. Paul is the child of Stephen; Stephen dying is the seed out of which Paul springs up. What a privilege so to die that a phoenix may rise out of our ashes! If we have been useful ourselves up to the measure of a moderate ability, we may, as we die, call forth greater workers than ourselves; our expiring spark may kindle the divine light in some flaming beacon, which far across the seas shall scatter the beams of gospel light. And why not? God grant that we may, both in life and in death, serve him well. I would that even in our ashes might live our former fires, that being dead we yet may speak.

It was a happy thought of an earnest divine, who asked that when he was dead he might be placed in his coffin where all his congregation might come and see him, and that on his bosom should be placed a paper bearing this exhortation, "Remember the words which I have spoken to you, being yet present with you." Yes, we will go on telling of Jesus and winning souls in life and death, if God so helps us. Beloved believers, love the souls of men, and pray God to save them. As for you who are not saved yourselves, I implore you think of what your condition will be when you come to die; or, if a seared conscience should cause you to die in peace, think what you will do at the judgment, when that conscience will become tender. What will you do when the lips of the dear Redeemer shall say, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire in hell"?

"Ye sinners, seek his grace,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Look to the dying Saviour's face,
And find salvation there."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts v. 9—15; vii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—855, 829, 853.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE ETERNAL DAY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 31ST, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."—Isaiah lx. 20.

ISRAEL of old had light while all the rest of the world sat in darkness. In consequence of receiving moral and spiritual light from God, the nation prospered, and under the smile of heaven it was greatly enriched and multiplied. But, alas, the sun went down, and the moon withdrew itself, for Israel turned aside and followed after idols, and the land was terribly smitten by the hostile sword. Upon her repentance her sun arose again, and the daughter of Judah rejoiced, but again they went astray, for the zealous judge, or the godly king, or the pious priest died, and the nation, prone to backsliding, again provoked the Lord, and the light of his countenance was withdrawn. This *typical church* of God abode not in the light continually, its history was chequered with alternate brightness and gloom, repentance and relapse, prosperity and adversity. What a change from the glory of Solomon to the captivity of Zedekiah, from the temple in its glory to the city in ruinous heaps! Truly to those who knew Israel well, this prophecy of Isaiah must have sounded as rare music, and they must have devoutly cried, "Hasten it, O Lord, in our time."

Another dispensation came; Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem, "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel," and the sun shone upon the earth as it had never done before. A *visible church* was called out to walk in the light, which church still exists upon the earth, and from the days of Pentecost until now its sun has never altogether gone down, neither has its moon withdrawn herself. To us the promise of the text has been fulfilled in a gracious sense, for to the church of God there has never been an utter suspension of the *divine light*; the light has not been always equally clear, but it has *still been day*. Somewhere or other God has had a visible church on

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the earth ; if not at Rome, yet in the valleys of Piedmont ; if not in palaces of bishops, yet in dens and caves of the earth. Yet the visible church has had her dark days—the text has been only true of her comparatively, her sun has gone down in some sense. The long mediæval night, with its heavy damps, hung over the souls of the myriads, and chilled them into crouching superstition, until the day when God sent us the Reformation, like a new daybreak. Even now there are tokens of returning night, but may the Lord avert it. Shine out, ye stars in the right hand of Jesus, and let your Lord, the Sun of Righteousness shine forth also, and drive away those Romish bats and owls which are fluttering all around us, in the hope that their beloved darkness will return. The history of the church has not been a clear increasing light, like the growth of day from dawn to noon, her glory has for a while departed, her candlestick has been removed, and it may be so yet again.

But, beloved, there is a church upon the earth which is within the visible church, and is its central life. I refer to the really elect, called and justified, which are a *spiritual church*. There are to be found in the visible church in all its sections, a people truly saved in the Lord, not a field of mingled wheat and tares, but all plants of the Lord's right hand planting. This secret church, this church mystical, this true body of our Lord Jesus Christ, may claim to have had this text fulfilled in its experience in a far larger sense. "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." There are believers who know the meaning of that text, for from the day when they first believed they have not ceased to walk in the light ; though now and then a cloud has crossed their sky, yet, as a rule, no night of backsliding or deadly doubt has come upon them ; they have believed fully, and therefore have seen the salvation of God. Their sun has not gone down, for the Lord Jesus Christ has never hidden his face, but they have rejoiced in an abiding sense of his love. I believe that this is the proper condition of all saints, and if saints were as they should be it would be fulfilled in them—"thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself ; for Jehovah shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." Oh, what a glad thing it would be if we could attain to this. "Being justified by faith, *we have* peace with God"—not we "ought" to have it, but "*we have* peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." We have learned to glory in tribulations also, crying, "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" If we have learned the meaning of the exhortation, "Abide in me," and are so abiding, then is our fellowship continual, and our course is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the full noontide.

"Walk in the light! and thou shalt own
Thy darkness passed away,
Because that light on thee hath shone,
In which is perfect day."

Yet even to the church spiritual the text has not been fulfilled in its largest conceivable sense, for I fear me that to the most spiritual

some darkness comes. Their light is sown, but it has not yet sprung up to its full harvest, struggle they still do with inward sin, wrestle they must still with outward temptations; at any rate, the days of their mourning are not, in the most unlimited sense, ended, for though faith lifts them above the cares of life, and resignation takes out the sting of affliction, yet in common with the whole creation they groan, being burdened. It is true of the best of saints when they arrive in heaven, that "they came out of great tribulation." God puts even his purest gold into the furnace, and the branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it. Every son whom he receiveth he also chasteneth. For the present our chastisement is not joyous, but grievous. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," is a part of the legacy of our ascended Lord, so that as yet to the largest extent we cannot say that the days of our mourning are ended.

We must, therefore, refer the text to a fourth form of the church. If we see it not at all in the typical, a little in the visible, very much in the spiritual, we find it all in the *church triumphant*. The full triumph of the church of Christ shall begin in the millennium. I am not about to enter into details, but it seems to me that there is to be on earth a new Jerusalem, which shall come down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride for her husband, and there will be "a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Upon this earth where sin prevailed righteousness will yet conquer: where Christ bled there shall he reign; where his heel was bruised shall the same heel crush the dragon's head. That, however, will be as it were a prelude, a commencement to the full heavenly triumph, and I shall, without making any distinction, refer the promise of the text in its fulness to the church in its triumphant condition, whether on earth in the millennial period, or in heaven, world without end. To her this word shall be fulfilled, "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

I. Our first point is—THE LIGHT OF THE TRIUMPHANT CHURCH SHALL BE INCESSANT. "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself." There will be no intervening nights of darkness, but one long noonday of purity and felicity, "the days of her mourning shall be ended." And why will this be? Why does heaven's joy never falter? Why is her purity never defiled? We answer, first, because *the light of heaven is independent of creatures*. As long as there is a sun it will go down, and as long as there is a moon it will wane; but when the Lord becomes our light our independence of the secondary agent will lift us up beyond the fear of change. In this present state everything must change; God does not bestow upon creatures the quality of immutability, for that belongs to himself alone. The hardest rocks crumble beneath the tooth of time; even the heavens are waxing old, and must one day be put away like an outworn vesture; and as all that comes out of earth partakes of the soil from which it springs, all created joys wither and decay. From a sun which has its tropics we cannot expect a changeless light; from a moon which waxes and wanes the light can never be long the same. When we shall rise above the creature, and drink in our supplies

directly from the changeless all-sufficiency of the Creator, then shall we come into perfect, unbroken light. Such is the condition of the perfect saints above. In heaven the saints will need no teacher. When God sends a true preacher he is a star in God's right hand, and the church is bound to value his light, which is the gift of heaven, but we shall need no teachers there; we shall see, not through a glass darkly, but face to face. God shines upon the church through his servants one after another, and as they are in the order of providence removed, and close their useful careers, the church suffers great loss, but up yonder there is only one pastor and he never dies: "The Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them and lead them unto living fountains of waters." No teachers will be laid with tears in the silent grave, for in the glorified church no man needeth to say to his fellow, "Know the Lord," for they all know him from the least unto the greatest. Up there they need no comforters to succour them in the time of their distress, for God himself has wiped away all tears from their eyes. He has taken up Lazarus from among the dogs and the dunghills, and laid him in Abraham's bosom; he has lifted up the languishing from their beds of pain to sit among princes in glory. Poor saints will not then be dependent upon the alms or the consolations of others, though once their generous friends were like sun and moon to them. They need not fear that their comforts shall depart, for the Lord God is their light. The saints are not dependent upon fleeting possessions, or decaying estates; here we must have sustenance from without, and we are thankful to God that it comes in our time of need; but bread perishes, wealth takes to itself wings, business decays, prosperity wanes. In glory saints are independent of all created things; they neither look to angel, cherub, or seraph for support. They have left the streams, for they have reached the Fountain Head; the vessels are no more needed, for they lie down and drink at the well itself, where the crystal water of life bubbles up eternally. They do not send down to Egypt for corn, but dwell in their own Goshen, where harvests never fail. They have come unto their God, and what can we say more? O beloved, this makes the joy of heaven, that God himself shines upon the blessed ones, and they need no other light; he himself is their all in all; with him is fulness of joy, at his right hand are pleasures for evermore. Therefore it is that their sun shall no more go down, for they have no sun, and their moon shall not withdraw itself, for they have no moon. "The Lord God and the Lamb are the light thereof."

Their light is incessant, secondly, because *it is cleared of all clouding elements*, and there is much of consolation in this thought. Here below in the church of God, whatever by God's grace may be our light, errors will arise to cloud it; evil men come in unawares and distract God's saints with false doctrines, and schisms, and heresies. There are none such up yonder. Sceptics assail us with doubts and suspicions: there are none up there. Hypocrites now steal in and pollute our solemn feasts, but no deceiver shall sit down in the banquet of the perfected. Formalists mix with us and freeze our devotion. Hosannas are made to languish because they fall from tongues unconscious of the glow of generous love: but it shall not be so among the

triumphant. It will be no small blessing to the church to be free from the contamination of the outside world, and from the intrusion of false professors. Their absence will deliver us from that light discourse which now vexes our ear, and that inconsistency which grieves our heart. Yea, Satan himself shall be shut out: the camp of the saints he may attempt to attack, but over her ramparts he shall never leap: those sacred walls, whose twelve foundations are inestimably precious stones, shall exclude for ever the accuser of the brethren, the fomentor of discord and sin. There the wicked cease from troubling, and therefore nothing shall make our sun go down, or cause our moon to withdraw itself, and the purity, the peace, the bliss of heaven shall be without cessation.

Remember, yet again, that in the church triumphant *the saints themselves shall be so purified* that nothing in them shall darken their light. Here to-day Christ changes not, but we change, and hence our joy departs: it is not that grace ceases to beam forth from the Sun of Righteousness, but our eyes gather the scales of worldliness, so that we cannot see it. It shall not be so there. We shall be delivered from the last vestige of inbred sin; corruption and every result of the fall shall have been effectually removed. Amongst the saints whom God has privileged to see his face, no worldliness, no coldness of heart, no idleness, no slothfulness ever intrudes. They are never burdened with heavy cares, nor depressed with the recollection of unforsaken sin; they neglect no duties, they commit no transgressions; they are without fault before the throne of God, rendered as pure as God himself by the blood of Christ and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. Truly, as I speak about this I long to be among them. We cannot as yet see afar off, and the plains of heaven are boundless, and therefore we shall need far-reaching sight ere we can enjoy their beauties; but our inner sight is being strengthened, the films of sin are being removed, and we shall ere long have our eyes strengthened to look upon the invisible with unblenching gaze. When we enter the church triumphant, being ourselves without tendency to sin, there will be nothing in us to mar our purity or to spoil our joy. Anticipate this, beloved, with great joy.

Notice that the text hints that both the major and the minor necessities of saints will be abundantly supplied. Have you not found sometimes that the Lord Jesus Christ has withdrawn himself from you? Then your *sun* has gone down. You are prospering in business; God gives you all that heart can wish, the moon does not withdraw herself, but the sun has gone, and woe beclouds your spirit. It will never be so in heaven, you shall see your Lord face to face without a veil between, and that eternally. Here, on the other hand, at times Jesus has shone upon you, and as to spiritual things you have been rich, but then earthly trouble has hovered over you, the *moon* has withdrawn herself. You have been suffering in body, though rejoicing in soul; the head has ached, though the heart has triumphed; you have feasted at the table of God, but poverty has swept your board till you knew not whence the next meal would come. Not often have both sun and moon been as flesh and blood would have them. True, you have been able to do without the moon in the presence of

the sun, but you would have preferred both spiritual and temporal prosperity. Now in heaven all the wants of our nature will be completely supplied. The bodies of the saints will be as happy as souls; their bodies, I say, for I am referring to the risen ones who have attained to the full triumphs of which I speak. There shall be for spirit, soul, and body, that trinity of our manhood, a triple and sufficient supply. Neither shall the sun go down nor the moon draw itself. Oh, what a happy thing to have a body which will need to rise on the Sabbath morning weary with the week's toil, and not being to be dragged along the road to the place of worship, and not inclined to sleep in the heavy atmosphere of the crowded assembly! What bliss to be "clothed upon" with a body unlike this load of which far too forcibly reminds us that we dwell in a world of sin! Soon we shall possess a body light and ethereal, strong and glorious, suitable for the soul and quick to obey its motions—a body free from every infirmity, delivered from every possibility of pain or weariness, a body in which we shall serve God day and night in his temple and shall never, never sin. So, you see, beloved, another reason why the sun of the blessed never goes down, because they themselves are in respects filled with an inward and perfect light, which is the perpetual reflection of the eternal light of Jehovah.

Once more, let it be remembered that *the church triumphant is delivered from the vicissitudes of those seasons which cause the going of sun and moon*. I do not refer to summer and winter, but to ecclesiastical and temporal arrangements, such as the Sabbath and time of assembly and church fellowship. This blessed Sabbath, how rejoice we are when it comes round! But then towards eventide the Sabbath hours grow few, and many a time has the child of God gone up to his chamber and said, "Would God to-morrow were a second Sabbath!" We have wished that instead of the week-days, with their toil and care, we could step from Sabbath to Sabbath, till we climbed into the Sabbath which will never end. It shall be so soon, in the land

"Congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end."

Here we come together and are warmed into a hallowed state of mind, and would gladly continue in the mount, but we must go down, for other duties call us away; but in the glory the livelong day we shall charm the celestial plains with joyous song, and never need to seek or betake ourselves to an inferior calling. Blessed shall the day be when our Sabbath sun shall no more go down.

Here, too, we have our seasons for communion. We come together at the table, and for my part I am never happier than when I see before me the emblems of the Beloved's broken body, and his precious blood poured out in infinite love for us; but we cannot be always even at the table, for we have to eat with publicans and sinners, as well as with the righteous. We glowed in fellowship like the Master himself on Tabor, until our garments seemed whiter than any fuller could make them, but we must needs go down amongst the ungodly yet again to seek their souls. We shall not do that by-and-by. We shall eat bread at the table of the King, and go no more out for ever and for ever.

It was a glad day for Israel when the trumpets rang out the morning of the Jubilee, for every slave was free, and every debtor found his liabilities discharged. Back came each man's lost inheritance, and the whole nation was glad. With sound of trumpet and of cornet they marked the rising of the sun on the first day of that Jubilee year; but the jubilee year went by, and lands were mortgaged and forfeited, and slaves fell again into slavery, and bankrupts were again seized by their creditors. Ah, beloved, we are coming to a jubilee, of which the trumpets shall sound on for ever. We shall regain our once forfeited inheritance never to have it encumbered any more; we shall snap the fetters which have bound us, never to feel them again. "If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Thus I have shown that in heaven they are free from that vicissitude of seasons which now afflicts the sons of men; and so their sun goes no more down, neither does their moon withdraw itself.

Let us change the run of our discourse. The light of the triumphant church has been shown to be unceasing; now we shall show that it is everlasting. "The Lord shall be thine everlasting light." This requires no comment. You can see at once why it is so. Why will the perfection and the bliss of the saints triumphant never end? First, because the God from whom it comes is eternal. We have explained that this bliss does not arise from the creature; if it did, it might end, but arising wholly from the Creator, how can it end? As long as God lives his people must be happy; when he has perfected them and taken them up to be where he is, the fountain from which they drink cannot dry, for it is infinitely full and fresh. The sun which gives them light cannot be dimmed, for it is immutable.

Again, the covenant by which the saints stand in heaven is a sure one. There are in it solemn engagements entered into by the eternal God, never to turn away from his love. By two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie, he hath given us strong consolation. Every sin has been put away from the triumphant saints. What, then, can destroy them? For them Christ has discharged all their debts; what, then, can be brought against them? For them an eternal inheritance has been bought by blood divine; how, then, by any possibility can they lose it? God is for ever true, he cannot forsake; God is for ever strong, he cannot fail; God is for ever loving, he cannot frown upon his people. The Lord must be their everlasting light.

Besides, the guarantee of that covenant can never fail, seeing it is Christ himself. "Because I live ye shall live also" is the great seal set upon the indentures by which we hold our inheritance in the skies; and till we shall see a dying Christ, till he who hath immortality shall expire, till Christ, the Son of God, very God of very God, shall cease to be, it cannot by any possibility come to pass that one child of God shall lose his inheritance. The seal is divine, the security is unquestionable.

And, beloved, there is this to be added, that those who possess heaven are also themselves immortal. When we once enter the church triumphant there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, for the former things are passed away. The body was sown in corruption,

but it is raised in incorruption; it was liable to disease, death, and corruption; the worm could devour it, and the winds scatter its particles; but it shall be raised in perennial youth, free from any tendency to corruption or any liability to suffer. Oh, happy spirits who in themselves possess a life enduring as the life of God. The Lord shall be their everlasting light. I leave that point, because it needs no enlargement; it rather needs to be thought upon and enjoyed.

III. I want your earnest attention and help, in the third place, while I mention that, according to the text, *THE LIGHT OF THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT SHALL BE BOUNDLESS*. "The Lord shall be thine everlasting light." Now, the Lord is infinite. If he is our sun there can be no limit to the light in which we shall rejoice. But how am I to speak upon an infinite theme? I can only touch the surface of the brook as the swallow does, and then up and away; but into its depths I cannot dive. Only notice this, that if God is to be our light, then *in every separate believer there will be a perfect light of bliss and holiness*. I mean in you, beloved. You are aged, you feel also that you are full of infirmities and sins; now, these will all vanish, and that weakened form of yours shall be raised in power. Your ignorance will give place to the light of knowledge, your sin to the light of purity, your sorrow to the light of joy. It does not yet appear what you shall be, but you shall be like your Lord, and you know how bright and lustrous your Lord was when he was on Tabor, and how glorious when he rose from the dead. Such shall you be. You are already a child of God, but soon your glory shall shine forth, and your purity, peace, and happiness shall be seen of all. Yes, this is true of you, you who were sometime darkness, but now are light in the Lord; you shall be flooded with glory. Like the bush in the desert you shall be aglow with Deity; bush as you are, God himself shall dwell within you, and your brightness shall be as the sun.

In the glory, in addition to your possessing personal light, you will enjoy *the closest possible fellowship with God*. How near a creature can get to the Creator it is hard to say, but the sons of God shall be brought as near to God as by any conceivable means a finite being can be brought to the Infinite. What delights there will be in such close fellowship! When we have drawn near to God in prayer we have been so happy we could scarcely have been more so; but what must it be to dwell for ever in the divine glory! Men of God have sometimes felt more of joy in his presence than their bodies could bear, and have cried, "Hold, Lord, hold; I cannot bear more; remember I am only an earthen vessel, and if I have more of this I shall die." Solomon sings of heavenly love-sickness in the song, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love." The love of Jesus overpowers our souls and casts them into a swoon of delight; we shall be more capable of its enjoyment soon. You cannot bear more than a sip of heaven yet, but you will swim in it by-and-by. When you only get one flash of heaven's sunlight you cover your eyes, because of the excessive glory; but you will soon live in the blaze of it, like Milton's angel in the sun; amongst the everlasting burnings of Jehovah's splendour you will walk with eye undimmed. Can you conceive what it means? Your mind will be enlarged, expanded,

made capable of loftier thoughts than now; you will be a grander being—a man, but such a man as the Man Jesus Christ is. Even this day your manhood in him has dominion over all the works of God's hands, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea; but then you will more clearly realise the royalty of manhood; you shall be a king to the fullest degree, a king unto God.

That glorious light will give us *the clearest views of gospel truth*. There will be no muddled theology in heaven, nor any doctrine concealed from us, for we shall know even as we are known. With the Lord for our light we shall see far and deep. Mysteries which perplex us now shall be simplicities then. How I long to know more of the covenant of grace; how I long to drink into the grand doctrine of electing love; how would I peer into the mystery of the Trinity, and know something more of the Three in One. Secrets will open up when Jesus applies the key. I suppose that he who has been in heaven but a day knows more of God than he who has been a Doctor of Divinity for fifty years; the light is so clear in heaven that we shall know even as we are known. Would God we were there!

There, no doubt, *we shall also understand more of providence*. Here our sun goes down sometimes as to the divine dealings; we cannot make out what he means; the lines are dark and bending; we thought he would have led us by a straight course, but we wind to and fro in the wilderness. Thou shalt see it all soon, brother; for what thou knowest not now thou shalt know hereafter. All the happiness which knowledge and understanding can bring to intelligent beings shall be at our feet.

There *we shall receive the utmost endurable joy*. Think of that bliss in the shape which you like best, for you shall have it. Some have thought the joy of heaven would lie in knowledge; they shall have it. Others have rejoiced in the prospect of continued service; they shall have it; they shall serve him day and night in his temple. I know not if I be idle, but the sweetest thought of heaven to me is rest, and I shall have it, for "there remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God." Peace! O quiet soul, do you not long for it? You shall have it. Security and a sense of calm! O, tempest-tossed one, you shall have them. Strength, power,—some have wished for that. You shall be raised in power. Fulness, the filling up of every vacuum! You shall have it; you shall be filled with all the fulness of God. I am a long way out of my depth now, but I am not afraid of sinking here; I shall never exaggerate; the joys of heaven are ecstatic, so that if we knew anything of them at this moment we should be like Paul, who said, "Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth." Ecstatic—that is standing right out of yourself, that will be your condition, you will get away from yourself altogether and be "plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea, and lost in his immensity." It will be a rapture, as it were, a snatching away of yourself; like the chariots of Amminadib shall be the joys into which you shall be uplifted and borne away. We shall know all about it before long, some of us, so that there is not much need to attempt a premature description. When the Lord is the light, who knows how bright the light

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When the Lamb is the light, who knows how soft the light will be? And when the Lord is the Lamb, and the Lamb is the Lord, and the Lord and the Lamb are at once the light, who knows how sweet how everything that is lovely, that eternal light must be! Break on us, break on us, O infinite splendour, for our hearts would leave this cloudland to be up and away, where sacred, high, eternal joy makes up the livelong day. But patience, my brethren, patience a little longer space; we must wait till our work is done, and then shall we receive the full reward. Let us be encouraged by the prospect of the glory to be revealed in us.

IV. My last point is to be this: THE LIGHT OF THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT IS UNMINGLE, for the text says,—"The days of thy mourning shall be ended." Sit down a few minutes and drink down this blessed sentence. "The days of thy mourning shall be ended." What sort of mourning? *The mourning from a persecuted world.* No slanders, no imprisonments, no racks, no breaking alive upon the wheel, no consuming amid the flames. What must heaven be to those who ascended through a shower of stones, or were borne aloft by the fiery chariot, as the martyrs from Smithfield's burnings? No more of suffering there. The mourning days of the martyr church shall be ended.

There will be no more mourning from *the common trials of life.* No losses, no crosses, no pains of body, no infirmities of old age, no bereavements, no child taken from the bosom, no husband from the side, no funeral knell, no cruel grave. Let the Lord be praised that not a wave of trouble disturbs yon glassy sea.

Then shall we be delivered from all mourning caused by *our inward sin.* We shall look within and find no envy in our hearts, no pride, no rebellion, no lust, no tendency to evil. Then we shall be delivered from all temptation to sin from without. No devil, no insinuating doubts, no corroding cares, no wicked world, no pomp of the eye, no pride of life, no woes of penury, nor perils of wealth; we shall be delivered from all these.

We shall be delivered from every kind of mourning as to *an absent God*, for we shall never grieve him any more, nor vex his Spirit, nor cause him to take down the chastening rod. "The days of thy mourning shall be ended."

I find that one version reads it, I know not whether correctly or not, "The days of thy mourning shall be *recompensed*," and I say this to those who have to mourn more than others, you shall have a recompense. Every pang you suffer shall have its reward. "But how can that come?" say you. Why, dear mourning ones, when you get to heaven you will see that you were fulfilling the divine purposes as much upon the sick bed as you would have been in the activities of life. You do not understand it now, but you shall then know that the Lord did not grieve you for nought; and when you see the great results arising from your sufferings, you will bless him and kiss the pierced feet of Christ, and thank him for the great privilege of being permitted to suffer. If you are called to suffer as a Christian, you will then see how you "made up that which was behind of the sufferings of Christ, for his body's sake, that is the church;" for the whole body of Christ

must suffer,—not the head only, but all the members; and you, in taking a part, help to make up the measure which must be endured by the entire company of the faithful. You will also see how the Spirit of God sanctified your sufferings to you, how they prevented sin, how they led you into a deeper experience, how they prepared you for higher service. And oh, amongst the sweet notes of praise which you will render to the All-loving Father, this will be one of the sweetest, you will bless him for every pain, for every groan, for every sickness, and the days of your mourning will be recompensed.

Beloved, what a change this will be for some here present, who have perhaps very seldom known a day free from depression of spirit or pain of body, to step right away from all this into everlasting, unalloyed delight! Some of us are soon cast down, and we know what it is to grow very weary in the brain; there, day without night, we shall praise and bless God, and tell to the angels the infinite wisdom of God in Christ Jesus.

All this ought to inspire the saints with ardour: this glorious hope should quicken us. We are not far from home. Pilgrims of God, you are getting weary perhaps; you especially who are advanced in years; now, at this time, the Spirit of God has brought you to the top of a hill, from which you can see your expected end. There it lies! See you not its hills, and its valleys flowing with milk and honey, and the vine and fig-tree under which you shall sit down, and none shall make you afraid? It is a little way further, only a little further. You will be helped all the rest of the road, as you have been up till now. Those shoes of iron and brass are not worn out, though you have worn them these fifty years; they will last you the few odd miles which you have yet to travel, and though you think it a long way, it is not so. Just out of sight, beyond that hill, there stand horses of fire, and chariots of fire, which your heavenly Father has sent to bear you away; and before you know it you will be in Christ's arms, fainting away with glory; before you know it, I say. Death will be but a pin's prick:—

“One gentle sigh, your fetter breaks,
We scarce can say you're gone,
Before your ransomed spirit takes
Its mansion near the throne.”

And the days of your mourning shall be ended.

Great fear should fall upon some in this house that they may never behold this light. I fear me, sirs, that some of you will never attain that blissful glory. I will ask you three questions and have done. Are you satisfied with earthly things? Are you content with a sun that must go down, and with a moon that must withdraw itself? Are you saying, “Who will show us any good?” Ah, sirs, your boasting is evil, for it will soon pass away, and what will you do in the day when money cannot help you, and broad acres cannot bless you, and friends cannot cheer you, and you must take the last dread voyage all alone? Woe, woe unto you if you have not a better sun than yonder feeble orb, a better moon than yon waning satellite.

I will ask you further, have you light from heaven yet? Is there any light from God within you? Remember, you cannot enjoy the

light of God for ever if you do not behold it now. Have you thought of that? Alas! God has not been in all your thoughts. How many live in this world with no more thought of God than dogs and horses have! He is no friend of theirs; they never seek his face, they never do him honour. If he be their Father, certainly they are strange children, for they never speak with their Father, nor care about him. Ah, sirs, ye want on earth the light from above, or ye will never have it in eternity.

Lastly, are you willing to have light from above? Are you willing to receive it? Do you desire it? Will you give up the light of self, and self-complacency, and self-reliance? Will you trust in Jesus? Will you take the Lamb who is the light of heaven, the bleeding Lamb, to be the light and comfort of your souls? Will you see your sin laid on the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, and trust him as suffering in your stead, to make expiation for your guilt? For, if so, the Lamb will give you pardon now and perfection hereafter; he will be to you the Star of Bethlehem to-day and the Sun of Righteousness for ever. God bless you, brethren; may we all meet in that land of light. I am speaking to some who will be there before me, though I shall be there before some of you: if there be a possibility of finding one another out we will do so, and we will remember the happy summer's morning in which we talked together of the light that can never fade, and we will say one to another, "The half was not told us. The poor preacher was but as an owl trying to describe the sun. It was too bright for him, but he did his best." God bless you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah lx.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—174, 359, 874.

WHILE friends at this season of the year are resting at the seaside will they kindly remember that our work goes on, and that every day our orphans require food and raiment, and we need £10 every time the sun rises to keep them supplied? Help is always gratefully received by C. H. SPURGEON, Nightingale Lane, Clapham. Those who are children of the Father of the fatherless will surely aid us in this blessed service of love.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FEARFUL OF COMING SHORT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 7TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."—Hebrews iv. 1, 2.

THE general strain of the apostle Paul is confident and even jubilant. Where in the whole compass of revelation do you meet with bolder writing than that which comes from his pen? "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." He is the great doctor of faith, and teacher of full assurance. You meet with nothing in his writings which would encourage doubting and fearing, or lead the saints into bondage to anxiety and suspicion. Yet, in the text before us, Paul does not speak of faith so much as of fear, and does not so much exhort us to boldness as to a reverent trembling, lest by any means we should come short of the rest which God has promised. Before we have concluded this morning's discourse, we shall be able to show that such caution is quite consistent with the apostle's usual teaching, and is indeed an essential part of it. He would have us cautious, that we may thereby lay a solid foundation for confidence. He who has been careful to build his house well, and to found it upon a rock, is the man who can fitly be at peace in the day of storm. The holy fear of to-day brings forth the full assurance of days to come.

It was important that the apostle's teaching should be of a complete and balanced nature. Only unwise persons allow any one quality of their character to destroy another—a moral balance must be aimed at
Nos. 1,177-8.

and maintained. The teacher of full assurance must also inculcate watchfulness, or he will be a one-sided instructor. Boldness and confidence are all the more likely to be preserved in their integrity if seasoned with the salt of holy fear, without which faith may become carelessness, and full assurance degenerate into presumption.

The apostle here exhorts us to fear upon a subject of the utmost importance. He had such a value for the rest which God has laid up for his people, that he trembled lest any one of his brethren should miss it, or seem to miss it. I do not marvel that a man so strong in faith as he was, and so full of holy expectancy of the promised rest, should feel a jealous alarm lest any of those committed to him should fail to reach the desired end. Is not every loving father fearful that his child may not succeed in life? Love never thinks of a beloved one tossed upon the sea without a measure of anxiety, nor can we see our friends crossing the ocean of life without a tender fear for them. That fear makes us beg them to be cautious and watchful. My earnest love to your souls compels me to dwell upon such sacred warnings as that of my text. Heedless and Toobold are never wise; in watchfulness is our safety. To this subject I shall address myself with all my heart, trusting that the Spirit of God may also arouse your hearts to give it the consideration which it deserves.

I. We shall first answer the inquiry WITH WHAT DOES THE FEAR ENJOINED IN THE TEXT MAINLY CONCERN ITSELF? "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Now, the apostle cannot mean that we are to fear lest we should come short of heaven for want of merit. Why, my brethren, there is not a man living, nor has one ever lived, nor shall one ever live, who will not come short of heaven if he tries *that* road. Human merit is not the way to heaven. Since the hour in which our first parent broke the law for us, the perfect keeping of the law has been impossible; neither is the keeping of the law set before us in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as the way of acceptance with God. "By the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." The just shall live by faith, and it is in the matter of faith that we are cautioned against coming short. The apostle would with indignation have spurned the idea that the gospel race is to be run at the foot of Sinai, and that its prize would be a reward for good works. Over and over again he has plainly declared "it is not of works, lest any man should boast"; but by grace, as the pure gift of the good pleasure and mercy of God. We must not, therefore, twist his words into a legal injunction, for they were never intended to bear such a meaning. The great point which we are to be concerned about is lest we come short of the heavenly rest by failing in the faith which will give us the rest. Notice the second verse of the text, for that makes it clear enough—"For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." To this, therefore, we must give earnest heed; we must see to it that faith is mixed with our hearing of the Word. The way to heaven is by faith—we are to fear lest we have a false faith, a faltering faith, or a temporary faith, and so come short of the heavenly rest.

Note, then, that it becomes us to be peculiarly anxious that we do not come short of fully realising *the spirituality* of faith. The Jews in the wilderness saw the sacrifices, but they did not look to the grand Sacrifice; they saw the blood poured out at the altar, but their eye did not look to the blood which would in the fulness of time be shed for many for the remission of sins; they looked at the washings and the divers cleansings, but they did not see that their spirit needed to be renewed and their nature changed. They were content with the outward ritual, and missed the inner meaning; they did not recognise that faith in the living God is the grand essential. I fear that many religionists of all denominations fall short in this. They are satisfied because they have attended to their sacraments and their ceremonies, or they are quite content because they have taken their place at a simple, unadorned service, but the mysterious power of the Holy Ghost is not felt, nor is its absence lamented by them. The outward things being done, they conceive that everything is done. Some read a chapter of the Scriptures and repeat a prayer daily, with the full conviction that the practice will be sure to do them good, though they do not meditate on what they read, or pour out their hearts in their prayers. As the Papist rests in his crucifix, and does not in soul come to Jesus, so may the Protestant rest in his Bible, or his form of prayer, and come short of real intercourse with God.

Many are content with the shells of religion, whereas it is the kernel only which can feed the soul. The bended knee is nothing, the prostrate heart is everything; the uplifted eye is nothing, the glance of the soul towards God is acceptable. The hearing of good words, and the repeating of them in prayer or in song, will amount to very little; if the heart be absent the whole thing will be dead as a stone. We must be born again, baptism availeth nothing apart from that; we must live spiritually upon the slain Redeemer, the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper avail nothing if we do not feed upon Jesus. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." The inner nature, the soul, must be quickened, for "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." I exhort you, brethren, to fear lest any of you come short of this, for if you do, you will come short of the rest which remaineth for the people of God. "Rend your hearts and not your garments," draw nigh unto God with your hearts, for if not your lips insult him. It will not matter how orthodox you may be in creed, nor how attentive to the rites even of the church of Christ itself: unless your spirit, your inner self, shall be reconciled to God, and pardoned through Jesus Christ, and have access to the Father in the power of the Spirit through Jesus, your religion is vain. This exhortation needs to be repeated in every street of our city, and the great majority of professing Christians need to be admonished concerning it, for everywhere the religion of show is set up, and the religion of the heart is neglected. The outside of religion is garnished with fine churches, organs and altars, and enriched with learning and eloquence, but the vitality of godliness, and careful conscientious discipleship are utterly despised.

The exhortation of our text leads us to say, next, that we must take heed lest we fail to discern the fact that the whole way of salvation is of

faith. Many have not even learned this elementary gospel truth. They suppose religion to be a matter of attendances upon religious exercises, observances of moral precepts, and the like; and so long as their life is regular, and their habits are respectable, they remain peaceful in the conviction that things are pretty right, or at any rate will right themselves one of these days, they scarcely know how. But who that reads this Bible attentively will fail to discover that the way of salvation runs in quite another direction, lies, in fact, here,—“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, but he that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him”? “It is of faith that it might be by grace.” “By grace are ye saved through faith.” The commission which our Lord gave to the apostles on the Mount of Olives ran thus, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” He did not say, “To him whose life is orderly faith is unimportant,” but he made faith an absolute essential. Let us not stop short of this, or be at peace till we can claim the promise, “He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.” Faith is essential, and we must have it. In a word, we must put our trust in the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; we must give up all other confidences, and cast ourselves entirely upon him, otherwise we shall certainly never enter into the rest which is reserved for believers.

Here let us examine ourselves with great anxiety, for on many points we may come short. As for instance, we may fail in reference to *the object of our faith.* A man may say, “I have faith,” but another question arises, “What have you faith in?” “Well, I have faith in what I have felt.” Then get rid of it; for what you have felt is not an object of faith, nor to be trusted in at all. “I have faith,” says another, “in the doctrines which I have been taught.” I am glad you believe them, but remember, doctrines are not the Saviour, and a man may believe all the doctrines of truth, and yet he may be lost; a creed cannot save, neither can a dogma redeem. What is the object of faith then? It is a person; it is a living, divine, appointed person. And who is that person? He is none other than Jesus, the Nazarene, who is the Son of God, God over all, blessed for ever; and yet the son of Mary, born into this world for our sakes. No faith will save a man which does not rest upon Jesus Christ as God; we must depend upon a whole Christ, or else our faith is not the faith of God’s elect. We must believe in his proper humanity, and rejoice in the sufferings which he endured: we must believe in his assured Deity, and rejoice in the merit which that Deity imparted to his sufferings. We must believe in Christ as a substitute for us, suffering that we might not suffer; making atonement on our behalf to the broken law of God, so that God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth. If we do not fix our faith upon this basis our faith is not the work of the Holy Ghost, for his work always tends to glorify Christ. Brethren, let us be very careful here, for if our faith be strong, but rests upon a weak foundation, it will be like a builder who should lay a course of granite upon a foundation of sand. It will be of no service whatever to have a firm faith, unless that faith has a substantial basis. If mistakes be made about the person of

Christ, they are fatal, for they destroy the foundation. If the very foundation be a false one, then all the upward building will only hasten the ultimate fall. Build safely, therefore, on the solid rock of God in human flesh, redeeming us by the sacrifice of himself. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid." "There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." Rest ye, therefore, on his blessed person and his finished work, or ye will surely come short of his rest.

Here let us remark that *the quality of our faith* must be one object of our anxious care, and for its qualities I would mention, first, that it must be *simple*. To rely upon Christ in part is deadly, our faith must be altogether unmixed. If I depend in part upon the righteousness of Christ, in part upon the occult influences conveyed by a priest, in part upon sacraments, in part upon my own repentance, in part upon my own faith, in part upon anything, I am lost for ever. Jesus will be a whole Saviour or no Saviour. I must throw my whole weight upon his bosom, and cling to him alone, for no other can bear me up from destruction. Look well to the simplicity of your confidence, my brother, and beware of mixing self-confidence with your faith, for all that is of nature's spinning must be unravelled, every thread of it must be destroyed. You think to help Christ? Would you yoke an emmet with a seraph? If you did, they would be a far more equal pair than Christ and self. Loathe, abhor, detest everything like confidence in yourself, or in your fellow men, or in sacraments or in creeds, or in anything whatsoever, save Jesus Christ your Lord.

"On Christ the solid rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand."

This faith must be as *real* as it is simple. It will not avail you merely to say, "I believe in Jesus;" you must really do so. So often have men told us, "Only believe in Jesus and you shall be saved," that persons have conceived faith to be a trifle, and have imagined that to think they believe will be quite enough; but to think you believe, and actually to have faith, are very different things. To rely alone upon Jesus is no small matter. "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent."

May your faith be not only real, but intense and *hearty*, earnest and living. Let your trust be a whole-hearted one, for, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." You know with what heart soldiers have trusted their commanders: they have gone into the fight and been outnumbered, but they have felt that their leader was so skilful in war, and so sure to win, that they have remained undaunted under terrible attacks, and their battalions have stood firm as iron walls amid a sleet of deadly missiles. With faith unstaggering they have rested in the prowess of their leader, and have earned the victory; such must be our confidence in Christ. Whatever may discourage our hope, whatever may contradict the promise, ours it is to repose in Jesus with all our soul and strength, for such faith unites to the Lamb and brings salvation through his name. Beware of a notional faith, an historical faith, a faith which deals with statements, theories, and opinions; get an enthusiastic confidence which flings itself at the

pierced feet, and lies there, or only rises up to march forward at the bidding of him who said, "It is finished," when he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Oh, may we never even seem to come short of such a faith as this!

But we must also take care that we do not come short as to *the inner working of faith* upon our nature. True faith walks hand in hand with repentance. A faith that never wept is a faith that never lived; faith without repentance is dead. Hatred of sin always accompanies a sense of pardon. Faith is the inseparable attendant upon regeneration, even as light attends the sunrising. When faith comes into the soul, the heart is changed, the man becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus, he receives new life, and with it new faculties, new hopes, new dreads, new loves, new hates, new pleasures, and new pains. "Behold I make all things new," is the voice of Christ when he comes into the heart by faith. Now, beloved, are you really, radically, and totally changed? If not, it is not for me to flinch from stating the truth to you,—however reformed and however devout you may seem to be, you come short of the divine rest: for "ye must be born again." There must be the new birth in your spirit, or else amongst the chosen of God you are not numbered, and amongst the saved ones you can never sit in heaven. Do search yourselves, lest ye be deceived.

"Vain are your fancies, airy flights,
If faith be cold and dead;
None but a living power unites
To Christ the living Head.

"Grace, like an uncorrupted seed,
Abides and reigns within;
Immortal principles forbid
The sons of God to sin."

Faith must also be judged of by *its power upon the character*. The man who really believes in Jesus becomes a man of prayer. Never had a man faith and yet despised the mercy-seat. "Behold, he prayeth," is a declaration akin to "Behold, he believeth." How about your private prayers, then, my dear friends? Are they neglected? Are they performed in a slatternly manner? I will not inquire so much as to your formal prayers, as to the spirit of prayer: does your heart all the day long go up to God in silent cries and secret groans? Do you speak to God out of your inmost soul by snatches while at your work? Do you say, "My God, my Father, help me," when none could tell that your lips are moving? If you have not the spirit of prayer, you are destitute of one of the surest signs of spiritual life, and you may conclude that your faith is dead, and that you come short of God's rest.

True faith works upon us by leading us to obedience. When we believe in Jesus, we desire to do all that Jesus tells us. Many Christians fall short here. They want to do as little as they can, and yet keep a quiet conscience; they do not read some parts of the Bible, for fear they should discover duties which would be inconvenient to attend to. Shutting the eyes to heavenly light is dangerous work. Do not knowingly neglect the smallest command of our Lord Jesus

for an act of wilful disobedience upon a point which may seem non-essential may sufficiently prove that your profession is rotten and false, because we do not delight in the law of the Lord.

“Faith must obey her Father’s will,
As well as trust his grace;
A pardoning God is jealous still
For his own holiness.

“When from the curse he sets us free
He makes our natures clean;
Nor would he send his Son to be
The minister of sin.”

works in us separateness from sinners. Those who believe in sin cannot enter into the pleasures of the ungodly; they have no joys; like the eagle they disdain the carrion upon which the vultures feed. Shall an angel be seen rioting with the unclean? Shall he be profane, enjoying their fooleries, and laughing at their sins? Yet the heir of heaven is akin to angels, and it were a disgrace for him to stoop to that which charms only the baser part of man. “Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” is the description of the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, and his true disciples follow him. What say ye as to your faith, my brethren? Is it of the kind which separates you from the world? Does it inspire you against temptation? Does it lead you to conquer sin? Does it enable you to walk with God? Does it put you into the light where there is no shadow? For remember that text, half of which is often quoted and the other wilfully forgotten, “If we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Mark well that the cleansing is joined to the walking in the light, why is this so seldom done? Walk with God, brethren, then are ye cleansed, but if ye are not walking with God you may well fear that your faith is not of the kind which brings the saints to their everlasting rest. I would fain speak with many tears and plaintive entreaties at this time as to press these solemn thoughts upon your minds; for, my brethren, there is room to fear lest a promise being left of entering into rest, some of us will come short of it. Refuse not to examine yourselves, for there is urgent need of it; I dare do no less than importune you to attend to the matter at once. Pursuing the same subject, our second point is this:—WHAT REASONS MAY SUGGEST THE NECESSITY FOR THIS FEAR? The first is this. It is certain that many professors apostatise. We see it every day just now,

“When any turn from Zion’s way,
Alas, what numbers do!”

They rush through the gates of hell. True faith is in every case permanent, and cannot be destroyed. If men have really entered into the kingdom by living faith, they will never depart from it, for “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” He who has begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. They

who come short of entering into this rest, may have thought they believed, but they never did. They may have had a sincere belief that they were children of God, but they were not; they deceived themselves, and mistook the name of life for life itself. Now, if others apostatise, may not we also? If we have really believed we shall not apostatise, but perhaps our faith is not real; our candle may have been lit by our own flame, and, if so, it will surely go out; nothing but the work of the Holy Ghost will endure to the end.

Note, again, that we ourselves know others who are, we fear, much deceived, and fall short of true salvation. We are not to judge, God forbid we should, but we cannot help, from the actions of some of our fellow-professors, shrewdly suspecting that their profession covers a good deal that is unsound. They could not act as they do if they were truly converted. We would with the utmost charity hope the best, but we cannot conceal from ourselves with fear and trembling that a large mass of professors are so worldly, so fond of every trifling amusement, so given up to self, and so negligent of anything like zealous service of God, that they cannot be Christians, though they profess to be such. Well, if we think so of others, may it not happen that somebody or other is thinking so of us? And what is much worse—for it is of very little importance what people think of us—it may be true that it is so. Though we have very much that is morally excellent, it may be that we are destitute of the real work of grace, and so come short of the rest which is given to faith. I suggest it to you all; I suggest it to myself most of all, and am prepared to abide the necessary tests.

Yet, more, remember there are some professors who know that they are not at rest. "We that have believed do enter into rest," but you know you do not rest. Am I not addressing some who claim to have faith, and yet they have no peace? You dare not sit down and cast up your spiritual accounts, and put yourself through an examination because you more than half suspect that you are spiritually insolvent; you do not like too searching a sermon, because you are conscious that there is something rotten in the state of Denmark, something amiss within your heart. You know it is so, for when you have a little sickness, or fear of death, you tremble dreadfully. Now, "if thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, what wilt thou do when thou contendest with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou hast trusted, they have wearied thee, what wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?" If you cannot bear a little shaking by the truth when I, your feeble fellow-man, am preaching, how will you bear the dread shakings of the last skeleton orator, who shall say, "This night thy soul is required of thee"? How will you endure the thundering voice of the great Judge of all?

I put to you another question; are there not professors here who are not even now content with Jesus? You take your Saviour's yoke as a necessity, but not as a delight; and when you want to enjoy yourself you run off away to the world: is not this a sure index of where your heart is? If you cannot find your richest joy in Christ, if he is not your chief delight, then it is clear you are already short of the rest for to a true saint there is no music like his charming name, and there is no delight like fellowship with Jesus. Now, if you already fail

discover the sweetness of religion, may you not fear that you are not a possessor of it at all?

O sirs, I beseech you to fear lest you come short of the living faith which will give you rest, for are not some of you listless and indifferent? Do not many professors go to their places of worship without heart? Are they not mere formalists, bowing their heads as if they were moved by machinery, but destitute of heart worship? They do not care whether Christ's church prospers or not; it never costs them a sleepless night whether Jesus' kingdom comes or Antichrist triumphs. They show far more concern about the rise and fall of Consols, or a change in the Cabinet, or the state of the crops, than they do about the kingdom of God and the things which make for the glory of the Most High. Now, where there is this listlessness and carelessness, does it not seem as if you came short of the sacred rest?

Some professors are quite destitute of energy or zeal; they serve God as if they were in a dream; they go about every godly work as if they had taken laudanum or soothing syrup; indeed, they look at religion as if it were a kind of cordial, given them on purpose to quiet them. Now, if the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, do not such people seem to come short of it?

We know others who are awake enough, but they are captious, critical, snarling. They seem to come short of the spirit of Christ, do they not? I am not going to judge them, but what can we say of them? They do not look very like their Master; the attribute of love is not very apparent.

We know some who do nothing for Jesus. Ragged schools? They have no interest in them. The preaching of the gospel? Of course they never attempt that, though they can speak well enough at a political meeting. Could they visit the sick? Oh, no! they have not the time. Could they teach in the Sabbath School? No, they cannot bear children! Could they open a cottage meeting? No, it is not a thing they at all approve of. Lions are in the way. There is nothing they can do; say rather, nothing they will do.

Many also of those who profess to belong to Christ give him of their substance the bare odds and ends, the small crumbs from under their table, and cheese-parings, which they never miss. Now, I do not say that such niggards are not Christians, but I do say let us not be like them, lest we should seem to come short. When I read the lives of martyrs giving themselves to burn for Christ, and see the worldliness of those Christians who cannot bear even a word of ridicule, I am sure they seem to come short of it. When we see men at the very first brush of battle ready to run, what judgment can we form of them? Are these the soldiers of the cross? Will these be more than conquerors? They leave the pure worship of God because it is not respectable, and they get away to the reputable religion of the world. Where is the blood of your sires, if sires ye had worth mentioning, if ye are ashamed to bear the reproach of Christ? Surely you seem to come short of what Jesus deserves. When I see the self-indulgence of many professors, the utter absence of any sacrifice for Christ, the lack of anything like ardour and zeal for the propagation of the truth, or prayer for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, am I too severe if

I say that many do seem to come short of it? Here, then, are arguments for holy anxiety.

Brethren, it may be that even now I am addressing some who are anxious to avoid the offence of the cross, who cut and trim in order to please their neighbours, who reckon the repute of the world to be greater riches than all the treasures of Jesus, who make provision for the flesh, and think fashion, credit, and respectability to be everything. These are the men whose god is the world, and who mind earthly things. May God have mercy upon such, and have mercy upon us by never allowing us to fall into such evil ways.

III. Thirdly, WHAT SOLEMN TRUTHS DEMAND THE FEAR SUGGESTED IN THE TEXT! If we should really come short of heaven we shall have lost all its bliss and glory for ever; for us no vision of the Crucified! no sight of the King in his beauty! And we shall have lost heaven with this aggravation, that we did begin to build, but were not able to finish. We shall be eternally covered with shame. The damned in hell will laugh at us because we professed to be different from them and came short after all. If I must be lost, let me not be lost as a pretender to religion, for the inner dungeon of the infernal prison-house is for those who played the Judas, who sold their Lord for pieces of silver, or came short by some other means. To have gone a little way towards heaven and then to miss it will render the loss of it the more intolerable. What if you should drink of the sacramental cup and then for ever drink of the cup of devils? It must be wretchedness itself to remember when lost, "I used to hear the gospel, and I professed to believe it; I sat with the saints of God and sang their hymns; I bowed my head and joined ostensibly in their prayers, and now I am for ever banished from the God of love. Instead of Sabbath rest I feel infinite misery, and instead of the songs of the saints I hear the howling of lost spirits for ever." O my brethren, fear lest ye come short of it. Nay, begin sooner, fear lest ye seem to come short of it, for he that is afraid of the seeming will be delivered from the reality.

IV. And now to close, HOW DOES OUR FEAR EXERCISE ITSELF? I must dwell on this a moment to prevent mistakes. Our fear of coming short of the rest must not lead us to unbelief, because in that case it would make us come short at once. As I have already shown you, the way is by faith. I am not, therefore, to fear believing, but rather to fear distrust and unbelief. I must not doubt the promise, or I shall at once come short of rest. The translators, by inserting the word "us" into the text, have clouded the meaning. There is no promise to *us* which we can ever come short of; every promise is sure. The text speaks of a promise which is left, left to believers, and so left that some must enter in. Do you belong to that *some*? That is the question. You do if you are a true, real, genuine believer in the Lord Jesus, if the word which you hear is mixed with faith, according to the second verse of my text; but if the word you hear is not mixed with faith, there is no promise made to you that you shall enter into God's rest, and you must come short of that which is promised to faith, because you have no faith. The promise is made to the believer in Christ. I will, therefore, fear to doubt my Lord, fear to distrust him, fear to suspect his veracity; I will believe that he came into the world

to save sinners, I will believe that he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. I will not hesitate to trust him, for I fear to doubt the God who cannot lie, lest it be said of me, "He could not enter in, because of unbelief."

Next, the apostle does not mean to have us always stand in doubt whether we are saved or not, for that would be to come short of the rest. A man cannot rest while he is in doubt about his own salvation, and, indeed, many texts teach the doctrine of assurance, and we are told that "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Now, Paul would not run contrary, nor have us run contrary, to the testimony of the Holy Spirit within us. If I have indeed believed in Jesus Christ then I am saved, and I must not doubt but what I am saved. I am bound to believe it, and so to enter into rest; I am to fear lest I should not fully realise my own personal salvation when I profess to trust my whole soul with Christ.

What the apostle would have us do I gather from the chapter in which my text stands. We are to hold fast our profession. If you have believed in Jesus cleave to him; if his cross indeed be your support, hold on to it as for dear life, never let it go. And when you are tempted by new-fangled notions, or by pretendedly old religions, say to them all—

"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my soul with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanities and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart."

"Christ for me, Christ for me, and none but Christ." Hold to that, and then you will not come short.

Next, submit yourselves to the whole word of God, for it is living and powerful. It will search your inmost soul even to the joints and marrow; habitually let it do so. Never be afraid of your Bibles. If there is a text of Scripture you dare not meet, humble yourself till you can. If your creed and Scripture do not agree, cut your creed to pieces, but make it agree with this book. If there be anything in the church to which you belong which is contrary to the inspired word, leave that church. To the law and to the testimony, here is the infallible chart of faith, follow it closely, and if you do, you need have no fear of coming short, for this book cannot lead you astray. Follow it to the letter, and be precise about it, even though men shall laugh at you for being too particular. Keep to every jot and tittle, and to the living spirit of it, and you will not come short.

Then, come boldly to the throne of grace. So the chapter concludes. There you will obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Cling to the mercy-seat as Joab to the horns of the altar. Pray much, pray always. Cry to God for help. Your help cometh from the eternal hills, and as you become more and more prevalent in prayer, you will feel that you do not come short, for God hears you, and he would not hear you and answer you from day to day if you were after all short of the faith which brings the soul into rest.

In a word, believe fully. If we have been half-and-half Christians, let us be wholly Christians. If we have given up to God a little of our time, a little of our substance, a little of ourselves, let us be

baptised into the Lord Jesus Christ, buried with him, given up to him totally; no longer sprinkled with a little grace, which may suffice to bespatter us with enough godliness to make us decent, but for ever dead unto the world and alive unto God in newness of life. Is it worth it? O ye that are bought with blood, is Jesus worthy of your entire selves? Ye profess to be Christians, and I charge you by that profession to answer my question. Is the faith of God and the kingdom of God worth your whole selves? I know what your answer is if you are sincere. You will say,

"Had I ten thousand thousand tongues,
Not one should silent be;
Had I ten thousand thousand hearts,
I'd give them all to thee."

O brethren, we have not done enough for God, because we have not loved God enough; we are not powerful, because we are not intense. If we were on fire with love, we should be very different; but we are cold, carnal, worldly, half-hearted, and we shall come short if we do not alter. May God in infinite mercy cause the faith which is in us to grow till it affects our entire nature, and the zeal thereof consumes us. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Hebrews iii. 12—19; iv.

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GLORYING IN THE LORD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."—1 Corinthians i. 31.

There is an irresistible tendency in us to glory in something or other. Some classes of men glory, the highest and the lowest, the richest and the poorest, the best educated and the most illiterate. Solomon glories, and so does the fool; Goliath glories, and so does David; Raah glories, and so does his slave. Even in the most modest tendency to boast is present, only its nakedness is daintily concealed. Men glory, yes, and in hours of weakness they have gloried in acts very unworthy of their boastings. You remember how, when ambassadors came out of Babylon, Hezekiah showed them all his treasures and his stores, and no doubt he gloried while he took them from treasure-house to treasure-house, and opened his caskets and showed his precious things. But it was an evil thing, and the Lord was angry with him for that glorying, and bade the prophet foretell that his choice vessels should be carried away as plunder by the very people whose ambassadors he had so delighted with the sight. The first person who was born into this world was the subject of glorying, and his mother, as she gazed upon him with rapture, said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." Perhaps she even said, as the original has been construed, "I have gotten a man—the Lord," thinking that surely he might be the promised seed of the woman who would bruise the serpent's head, and would prove to be both a man and the Lord. Alas, it was Cain, who slew his brother, and was a murderer of the serpent rather than the bruiser of his head. The thing we glory in, though it be a dear child, may turn out to be a scourge for our souls, a Cain and not a consolation. Jacob glories in Joseph's princely raiment, but he wept indeed when he saw its many colours all turned to

a blood-red hue. I say good people have the tendency to glory, and sometimes they glory in unworthy objects, and therefore it is that God has prepared a cure for it—not by repressing the instinct to glory but by giving a worthy subject for glorying, which finds it a wide range, and full liberty, but only in a licensed field. It may not wander there, nor there, nor there, for it is ill to glory in worldly things, but it may fly away up yonder to God himself, and stretch its wings, and plume itself as much as it will in heaven. The cure for vain glory is true glory. Somewhat upon the homœopathic principle, the cure for boasting is to boast in the Lord all the day long. The prevention of glorying in men, and glorying in riches, and glorying in self, is glorying in the Lord. “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” On that text we shall now speak.

And we shall have these four points. First, let us, dear brethren and sisters, as many of us as know the Lord, *glory only in the Lord*. Then, secondly, let us *glory heartily in the Lord*. Thirdly, let us *glory growingly in the Lord*. And, lastly, let us *glory practically in the Lord*.

I. First, then, LET US GLORY ONLY IN THE LORD. And we should do this because *the theme of glorying is too great to admit of another*. It was a good argument of a simple-minded man that there could not be two gods, because the first God filled heaven and earth, and all places, and therefore there was not room for another. If God be everywhere, and fills all in all, there can be no other god; and if the glory of God be infinite, then there can be no second glory; and if the theme be boundless, then there is not room for a second. As all other gods but Jehovah must be idols, so all other glory save that which is in the Lord must be foolish and sinful. Those men who really know the Lord feel that such is the greatness of his glory, that it takes up all our faculties, absorbs all our powers, demands indeed our whole energy, and we cannot spare time, or love, or skill, or power, or thought for any other topic. Let the Lord be gloried in, and him alone, because the Lord alone is worthy to be gloried in. He only is great, he is the blessed and only Potentate, from him only cometh our salvation, he is God alone, therefore in one rolling flood let all our glorying cheerfully flow at his feet.

All glory should be given unto God, because *any other object of glory highly provokes the Most High*. He has said, “My glory will I not give to another, nor my praise to graven images.” It is written concerning Israel, “They moved him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel” (Ps. lxxviii. 58, 59). The moment we begin trusting in a created arm, God is highly provoked with us. “Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm;” and if we begin glorying in anything else, either the Lord will send the worm at the root to make the gourd wither, or he will stamp our idol in pieces, and make us drink of the bitter water with which it is mixed, or else he will inflict upon us some other severe chastisement, for he cannot bear a rival. Where the ark of the Lord is, Dagon must come down. God will be all, or nothing. He cannot accept divided homage. Let us not provoke him, then, especially when he tells us, “The Lord thy

is a jealous God." Since he is so tender of his own name, let us tender of it too. If he would bear it, even then it would be wrong as to test and try him; but since he will not bear it, but is jealous, and his fury goeth forth like flames of fire, let us take heed what we do. Think of Nebuchadnezzar, and how his proud speech led to his loss of reason and herding with cattle. Remember Belshazzar, and how he was found wanting, because it was said of him, "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified, thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, and wood, and stone, and iron, which see not, nor hear, nor know." Remember how the Lord smote Herod, so that he was eaten of worms, because he received vain honours and gave not God the glory: "Give glory to the Lord our God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains." Glory ye in the Lord alone, for he will not endure to have it otherwise.

There is, indeed, my dear brethren and sisters, *no other fit ground for glorying in all the world except the Lord*. For what would there be in this world, if God were to withdraw his power? If there were no other object in which we thought we could glory, yet since it came from him it would be idle to glory in the streams, we had better rest in the fountain-head from which the stream descends. All things that exist only by the will and sovereign good pleasure of the Lord. All, let us not glory, then, in that which depends upon him, but in God himself, the well-head of all. Glory not in the sunbeams but in the sun which scatters them, not in the drops but in the heaven from which they distil, not in the goods but in the Supreme Good who bestows them.

Moreover, all things in this world are fleeting, and wherefore should we glory in that which to-day is, and to-morrow will pass away? "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of grass;" who will dare to rejoice in it? The grass withereth; though to-day it is in its prime, to-morrow it is cast into the oven; it is a poor thing upon which to doat. The drunkards of Ephraim chose for their crown of pride and glorious beauty a fading flower; but we who are sober reject a fleeting a diadem. Only very benighted heathen could worship a crown of snow, melting at every glance of the sun. Shall an immortal spirit delight in dying joys? Shall the heirs of eternal bliss glory in a momentary treasure? Glory not, therefore, in the things that so soon depart. Let your glory be in that which will last as long as your own being. Heirs of immortality, take care that you have something of glory in which will never wither or decay; set your love upon that which rust cannot canker, nor moth devour.

Besides, there is nothing in this world that has in it qualities worthy of our glorying therein, in comparison with God. He is the sun; the stars must hide their heads when he appears. He is the ocean; all these ponds and pools are of small account; let us bless the eternal ocean of all-sufficient glory and goodness, and not turn aside to magnify our little Abanas and Pharpars. Sin is stamped upon almost everything, and even the unfallen angels, in comparison with God, are little worth; the purity that excelleth eclipses all. "The heavens are not pure in his sight," and he charged his angels with folly." Foolish is he, there-

fore, who shall boast in these inferior things while the thrice Holy God presents himself as the true and legitimate subject of our glorying.

"Praise the God of all creation,
Praise the Father's boundless love;
Praise the Lamb, our expiation,
Priest and King enthroned above.
Praise the Fountain of salvation,
Him by whom our spirits live;
Undivided adoration
To the one Jehovah give."

Dear friends, we ought to glory in the Lord, because *when we do so we shall be in accord with the true order of the universe.* Look ye abroad, and mark the works of God in creation; what do they glory in? "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." The great pulses of the universe will keep time and tune to your heart if you glory in the Lord. "All thy works praise thee, O God." Creation is a temple in which every one speaks of the glory of Jehovah. Turn to Providence, and faith's eye perceives that Providence is always displaying the glory of the Lord. All things work not only for the good of the elect, but for the glory of the Most High: "For of him and through him and to him are all things, to whom be the glory for ever." The ponderous wheels, as they revolve in all their solemn grandeur, are full of eyes, and those eyes look to the glory of God. You are in accord both with providence and creation when you glory only in the Lord. Lift up now your eyes and behold the angels, those bright spirits who watch over us, and rejoice when we repent. What think you is their song? "Glory to God in the highest." Truly they sing, "Peace, good will towards men," but first of all they cry to one another, "Glory to God." This is their ancient song, and they have not ceased to sing it. You are in accord, therefore, with the blessed spirits who do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word, when you glory only in him. Yea, and you are in accord with the divine Trinity; for what does the Father do but glorify the Son? What does the Son aim at when he says, "Father, glorify thy Son"? It is, "that thy Son also may glorify thee." What does the Holy Spirit do when he takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us? Has not Jesus said of him, "He shall glorify me"? There is a mutual delight in each other in the persons of the blessed Trinity, so that each divine person delights to glorify the rest. God even thus glorifies himself. All his works praise him, all his decrees praise him; all things which are, or shall be, shew forth his sole glory. Well, dear brethren and sisters, as we do not wish to be out of gear with the works of God, or opposed to his nearest attendants, or in rebellion against the sacred Trinity, let us stand to it that our souls shall glory only in the Lord as long as we live. So much upon that first head, let us glory only in the Lord.

II. Now, secondly, may the Spirit of God help us to GLOBE HEARTILY IN THE LORD, with the whole force of our nature renewed by grace, not as a matter of form, but in deed and in truth. Let us make our boast in the Lord heartily, doing it so that the humble man

ear thereof, and be glad, since there is good cause for heartily glorying in the Lord, first, because of *his love*. "God is love." O you that have tasted of that love, glory in it; glory that it is eternal, that it never had a beginning, that he fixed his love upon the objects of his choice before the mountains lifted their hoar heads above the clouds. Glory in it. It is no passion of yesterday, but the deep-seated, fixed resolve of all eternity, the purpose of the Ancient of days, when as yet days had not begun their little round. Speak they of antiquity? Lo, it is here! "I have loved thee with an everlasting love!" Shall we not glory in this? I am resolved that none shall stop me of this glorying while my tongue can speak.

Glory in the divine love in its wonderful benefactions, inasmuch as having loved his people he gave his only begotten Son that they might be redeemed from wrath through him. God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. The Only Begotten is God's unspeakable gift, including and securing every good gift. What manner of love is this! We can never measure it, nor fully declare it, let us resolve for ever to glory in it. There was never such love as this, love so ancient, love so disinterested, so boundless! Love which brought the darling of heaven down to be despised and rejected of men. Oh, mighty love that could hold the Son of God himself in fetters of affection, lead him into a lifelong captivity to its power, and at last fasten him to the deadly tree!

That love of God to us was free, unpurchased, unsought. He loved us because he would love us; not because we were lovely, but because he was love. He must love, for love is his nature, there was no other constraint upon him. Oh, blessed, blessed be the love of God, to think it should come to us unsought, unbought, undeserved, spontaneously leaping up like a living fountain with none to dig the well, but springing up in the midst of the Sahara of our barren nature, and then blessing us with unspeakable blessings as it overflowed. Glory in the love of God! Here is sea-room for you. Beloved, there is no love comparable to it. If all the loves that ever burned in the hearts of mothers, and brothers, and wives, and husbands, could all be heaped up they would be but a mole hill compared with the love of God in Christ Jesus; and if all the loves that ever were among men or angels could be gathered together they would be as a spark, and God's love to us like a mighty furnace flame. Glory in it, therefore, all the day long, for well you may. "He loved me, and gave himself for me."

You need not give up glorying when you have reached the centre of your subject, for you can glory next in the Lord's *faithfulness*. Glory in the fact that he never yet changed the objects of his love. Whom once he loves he never leaves, but loves them to the end. No fickle lover is he! No husband who sues out a divorce against his errant spouse. "Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement that I put away? To which of my creditors have I sold you?" No, we can challenge all mankind and say, "The Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away." You may glory in the faithfulness of God as to all his promises. He has never broken his covenant, nor

neglected to fulfil his word. To no child of his has he acted unkindly; in no hour of need has he deserted one that trusted in him. Under no peril, and under no provocation, has he cast away his people whom he did foreknow, so that this day the whole Church is persuaded that "Neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Go and glory that his mercy endureth for ever. Tell it everywhere that man can lie, but God cannot; that man can forget his promise, and can utterly forsake his dearest friend, but that the faithful God has never yet run back from his covenant, no forfeited the oath of his grace.

And if you should want a change of subject, I would recommend you to glory in the Lord as to his *holiness*. This is an attribute which hath charms to Christians, but to none besides. "Bless the Lord, O my soul," says David, and he adds, "And all that is within me, bless"—his *gracious* name, is it? No. Bless his *loving* name? No. It runs thus, "Bless his *holy* name," because the whole includes all the parts, and the holiness, or the wholeness of God is a grander thing than any one of the distinct attributes which make up the wholeness, or the holiness of his character. Go ye and glory in the holiness of God, for there is none holy as the Lord, neither is there any god like our God. It is this which angels glory in, for as they veil their faces, they say, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts." It is a grand attribute of God. "The Lord is great in Zion, and he is high above all the people. Let them praise thy great and terrible name, for it is holy." Bless his name that even to show his love he would not be unholy, and even to forgive sins he would not be unjust. He never blunted the edge of the sword of justice in order to stretch out his hand of mercy. He is as sternly and inflexibly just towards sin as if he never forgave iniquity, and yet he forgives sinners through Christ Jesus as freely and fully as if he never punished a transgression. All his attributes are full-orbed; no one impinges upon the other so as to diminish its lustre. "The Lord our God is holy," while at the same time "God is love." Let us therefore glory in his divine perfection, and in the wondrous atonement for sin which was required in consequence. An unholy God could have dispensed with an expiation, but then we should have had no ground for confidence, since he who can set aside justice in one direction might do it in the opposite, he who pardons without atonement might also punish without fault. For my part, I always glory in the old-fashioned doctrine of substitution. I do not know anything about the atonement which has been invented by the cultured gentlemen of modern times; though their theory is so often cried up, it contains so little worth the crying. They call ours a commercial atonement, and truly we cannot call theirs by the same name, for it is worth nothing, and none would care to commerce with it. It is a hazy kind of atonement which did something or other, I do not know what it was, in so intangible and mysterious a manner that it is but remotely connected with our getting to heaven; what it was nobody knows, but each divine has a theory for his own private use. I believe Christ bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that "the chastisement of our peace was upon him,

and that with his stripes we are healed"; that there was a literal and actual expiation made by Christ, and that

"He bore, that we might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire."

and this I glory in, because it shows the justice and the mercy of God talking hand in hand; righteousness and peace kissing each other, and entering into a solemn compact for the salvation of the sons of men. Surely in the Lord Jehovah we have righteousness and strength, and therefore will we glory in him for ever.

"Holy, Holy, Holy! All
Heaven's triumphant choir shall sing:
When the ransom'd nations fall
At the footstool of their King:
Then shall saints and seraphim,
Harps and voices, swell one hymn,
Round the throne with full accord,
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord."

And if you feel you would like to alter the subject, then glory in the *all-sufficiency* of your God, and in the liberality with which he distributes his mercies among his chosen. Notice the verse that precedes the text: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." In Christ Jesus is not one good thing given to us, but every good thing. He does not give us part of salvation, but the whole of salvation. Do we need to be instructed? Christ is our wisdom. Do we need to be clothed in the sight of God with a righteousness that shall render us acceptable? Christ is our righteousness. Do we need to be purified and cleansed? Christ is our sanctification. And do we need to be set free and delivered from all bondage? Christ is our redemption. In God the Christian finds sufficiency; let us improve the word—all-sufficiency. There are riches of grace in Christ Jesus, all that you can want, all that the myriads of God's chosen can want—so much, that after all the saints have taken immense draughts, there is as much left as before. I felt when I was coming up to preach to-night as if I had been down like a little child to the sea, and I had stooped to the wave and filled my palms as well as I could with the sparkling water, but as I have been coming to bring it to you, it has nearly all trickled away, for I am not able to hold it by reason of my shaking hands. Yet, for all that, the little I can bring will make you, I hope, rejoice in the great eternal ocean from which it was taken, for you will never drain God's love, and mercy, and truth dry, though you should draw from it for ever. You need never think you will exhaust infinity. When a child of God thinks he has exhausted the patience and mercy of God he is something like a little fish in the sea which said, "Oh, I am so thirsty, I am afraid I shall drink up the Atlantic." Little fish, thou hast no idea how mighty the ocean is; countless myriads such as thou art may swim in it, and the ocean will be none the less. O beloved believer, yours is no stinted store. Joseph said to his brethren, "The good of all the land of Egypt is yours," and it was a great word; but the Lord Jesus says to you to-night, "All things are yours, whether things present, or things to come, life or

death, all are yours." We have not gone to the full length, when we have quoted that; for there is another word that overtops it all, "I am thy God"; and to have God to be ours is more than to have heaven and earth, and things present and things to come. No one living on earth or even in heaven can tell how vast are the possessions of a believer who can say, "The Lord is my portion." Go and glory in God's all-sufficiency, and the freeness with which he gives it out.

There is one point every child of God may glory in, but he will scarcely care to do so unless when he is alone by himself, or with brethren who can sympathise. We glory in the *nearness and dearness of the relationship* which God holds to us. The man who can bow his knee, and say from his heart "Our Father," has more to glory in than the Czar of all the Russias, or the Emperor of the grandest nations of antiquity. Is Christ my brother? I am ennobled by that relationship. Is he married to my soul? Is it indeed true that thy Maker is thy husband? Is God so very near that he cannot nearer be? And am I to him so very dear that I cannot dearer be, because in the person of his Son I am as dear as he? Then ought I not to glory in this? And whilst some will say, "We are rich, and our riches are the main chance"; and others will say, "We have followed after wisdom, and we rejoice in what we have discovered," and a third party will say, "We are famous and great, and we glory in our honours"; we will sit down in some quiet corner, where none shall hear us but the Lord, and we will say, "I am my Beloved's, and he is mine: this is my glory, and I will boast in it both in life and in death." So then, beloved, I have shown that you have good cause to glory in the Lord heartily, but I cannot make you do it. I pray the Holy Spirit to stir the hearts of all God's people to make them glory in the Lord, and exult in the God of their salvation.

"My God, I'll praise thee while I live,
And praise thee when I die,
And praise thee when I rise again,
And to eternity."

Neither till death, nor in death, nor after death will we cease glorying in the Lord.

III. Now we come to the third point, and that is, we ought to GLORY IN THE LORD GROWINGLY. That is to say, beloved, we should glory in God in proportion as we learn more of him, and receive more from him. Many believers only know the elements yet, they are at a preparatory school, and sit among the babes in Christ, hence their songs are children's hymns, and not the grand old psalms of heroes and sages. It should be our desire to grow in the knowledge of our Lord. Beyond the rudiments of the faith there are deeper, higher, and fuller truths which invite our consideration, and will abundantly repay it. Perhaps you learned justification by faith a long while ago; but you have not learned the doctrine of election yet, nor the doctrine of the unchangeable love of God; labour to know them, for ignorance of them is neither bliss nor strength. As a faithful disciple go on to learn more and more, and when you have learned the more mysterious doctrines, glory in God more; as you know more, be sure you return to him more

; for, if anything which you believe concerning the Lord does not you to praise him more, either it cannot be the truth or else your is in a wrong condition. Every genuine revelation of God has mark upon it, that it makes him appear more glorious. The m which derogates from the honour of God cometh from beneath, founded in a lie; true wisdom exalts the name of the Lord, and the heart in adoration.

oved, glory growingly in the Lord as you know more of him by tion. Moses said, "I beseech thee show me thy glory," and after he had been put in the cleft of the rock, and seen his God, ried more in him than ever. Isaiah was a man of stammering and was afraid to speak in God's name, until one day which he forgot—for he tells us the year, "In the year that King Uzziah he recollected it well enough—he saw the Lord sitting upon e high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple, while the of his presence made the posts of the doors to move. Then became very bold for his Lord, and said, "Here am I, send me." ras, also, all the more resolved to know nothing but Christ d after he had been caught up into the third heaven, and there an and heard the glory of the Lord. Now I pray the Lord to himself to you, dear friends, more and more, that you also may his glory, and receive a sacred bias thereby. May you see in your meditations, see him by communion and fellowship with And as you see more of him, go and tell abroad more of him, ; others know what a glorious God you serve. His angels behold nd then he makes them messengers; be yours the vision and ours the errand. What we have seen and heard, that must we unto men.

will, as you live, see more of the glory of God in his gracious gs with you, for that is one of the methods by which that glory aled. Christ said to Mary and Martha, "Said I not unto thee, i wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God?" and get our prayers answered, as we are delivered in times of , and as all things are made to work for our good, we see the glory k. Never let a special season of mercy pass without praising ever let an answer to prayer be unrecognised, but magnify the who in his abundant mercy has had such compassion upon you. him, then, growingly. As answers to prayer increase, glorify ore; as grace is given to you in times of need time after time, him more; as you find yourself helped providentially in hours ble, and so see the wonderful working of the hand of the Lord alf of his people, glorify him more. And I will tell you what lp you to glorify him more, it will be the sight of conversion going on in other people. I do not think Christian people God at any time so heartily and thoroughly as when they see saved. The sight of a young convert warms up old blood; and s we had doubts, troubles and inward fightings while we were ip in ourselves, when we get to hear little children in Christ their Father, and hear them rejoice as the Lord puts away ins, our confidence comes back, all our sacred passions begin to nd we say, "This is the place for me, for here I see the glory

of God." "His glory is great in thy salvation." Where Christ works savingly, there the glory of God is mightily revealed, and when the Lord builds up Zion, he appears in his glory, and his servants rejoice to behold him. How can they do otherwise? the stones would rebuke them if they were not to do so; they must glory in God more than they have ever done before.

By-and-by, dear brethren and sisters, as time rolls on, we shall know more of the Lord, and get to be more like him, and approach nearer to the glory itself. Beholding that glory, as in a glass, we are changed from glory to glory, as by the image of the Lord. As we come nearer to the approaching hour of our full redemption, the pins of our tent are taken up, and the curtains of our tabernacle begin to be removed, and we look forward to the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," in which our one employment shall be to behold the glory of our Lord for ever.

Let us even now wholly glory in the Lord. I have known some old Christians who were just one mass of glorying in the Lord. Their very faces shone with the brightness of his presence. They did neither talk to you in private, nor join in the public prayer, nor give forth any utterance, but what you said of it, "Surely they have seen the glory, and their hearts are burning with it, and therefore their tongues speak marvellous things, and they talk as men whose lips have been touched with a live coal from off the altar." When these hairs grow grey, may we be such old men and old women, may we be continually praising and glorying in the Lord all the day long. We had better, begin at once, for time is precious, and a good work cannot be commenced too promptly.

"I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise,
O for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies."

IV. Now I come to the last point, which is, let us GLORY IN THE LORD PRACTICALLY. And how can we do that? Every Christian ought to glory in the Lord practically, by owning that he belongs to his redeeming Lord. Are you a Christian, and are you ashamed of it? How can you be said to glory in the Lord? A man does not hide away that which he glories in. If he glories in it he does not object to its being seen. Why, if he glories in anything, if others accuse him that he has to do with it, he owns to the impeachment, and he says, "It is even so; and I am not ashamed of it; I glory in it." Charge a veteran with having been at Waterloo, and he will glory in it. Accuse an artist of being a Royal Academician, and he will own the charge. Abuse me for loving my wife and children, and I smile at you. Why, then, blush to be called a follower of Jesus? You that love the

ord, I beseech you, come forward and say that you glory in him. The Lord deserves that his people should confess with their mouth what which they feel in their hearts. It is the least thing we can do, if he has saved us, to be willing to own that he is our Saviour, and that we rejoice in him.

Then, brethren, after we have thus confessed his glory let us come to glory in him by talking about it on all fit occasions. Do you think that we are a deal too reticent in our piety? We love the Lord, but we seem as if we do not want to tell anybody we do so; and common conversation does not bewray us as it ought to do. It is not to be so full of grace and truth, that men would find us out at once.

Even as the rose betrays itself by its perfume, and even the diamond by its shining, so should our glorying in the Lord discover itself to all observers. I have heard talk of a professed Christian of whom his servant said, "I am glad my master goes to the sacrament, for if he had not done so I should not have known he was a Christian." I should think the chances were he was not a Christian at all; for he ought in our common conversation so to glorify God that others would at once take knowledge of us, that we truly know and love his Son. A foreigner may speak English well, but he is known by his accent, and the accent of grace is quite as marked as that of nature. Talk to all around you about the Saviour. I do not know a better way of getting rid of troublesome people than often to talk of Jesus. There are certain talkatives, who vex you with their evil discourses; they glory in the Lord Jesus Christ and they will soon go away, for they will not like such weighty discourse; and at the same time better friends will be attached to you who will love to join you in holy glorying.

Glory in the Lord by standing up for him when he is opposed. If you hear the proud ones ridicule his gospel, and despise his people, put your word for Jesus. Stand out and say, "I am one of his disciples. I will not despise me! I hold those opinions; ridicule me! After the way which the Lord has commanded, we shall all heresy so worship I the Lord God of my fathers." This is a biblical way of glorifying him, but many who have grown rich and respectable are much too mean-spirited to practise it. I am ashamed of the cowardly spirit of many in these days who give up their Nonconformity, because they cannot otherwise get into what they call good society." The Lord have mercy on them.

Glory him again by being calm under your troubles. When your affairs are fretting and worrying, possess your soul in patience, and say, "No, I do not serve a fair-weather God, and I am not to be cast down and put down, for the eternal God is my refuge, and underneath me are the everlasting arms. It does not become a man to be troubled who has the God of Jacob for his help. I will bear trouble patiently, if he wills to send it."

Glory in the Lord, brethren, practically, by having a contempt for those things which others value so much. Do not be greedy after the world. Love God too much to care for earthly treasures. If God gives you wealth, thank him for it and use it. If he does not, do not worry about it. Feel that you are rich enough without the heaps of yellow metal. You have your God, and that is the best wealth; you have a heaven to go to, and a little heaven below. Rejoice in that which you find in your God. Live above the world. May God's Spirit help you. "Let your conversation be in heaven." Thus glorify God, and when men look at you compel them to feel that there is something in you and about you which they cannot understand, for you have been with Jesus, and you have learned of him. In all these ways "he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord."

I am sorry, in closing, to feel compelled to say that I am afraid many do not understand this. Perhaps you have gloried in your priests, and thought they were great. Very possibly some of you glory in your minister, you think he is very eminent; and some of you, it may be, glory in your purses, and your possessions. Some of you glory in your broad acres, and large houses. Some of you glory in the skill you have in your trade, or your quickness in business. It may be many of you glory in the fact that you are not as other men are. All these gloryings are evil. God help you to put them down. Even to glory in your church, and glory in your sect, and glory in your creed is wrong. To glory in the Lord is the work of his Spirit, and to live to make him glorious in the esteem of men is the only thing worthy of an immortal mind. You will never glory in God till first of all God has killed your glorying in yourself. May he be pleased, in his infinite mercy, to show you unconverted sinners that there is nothing about you which you can justly glory in, but everything for which you ought to be ashamed and to loathe yourselves. May he make you fly to Jesus. I pray you trust him and be saved! The Lord bless you in this matter, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Corinthians i.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—242, 174, 420.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FORTY YEARS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 14TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For the Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing."—Deuteronomy ii. 7.

THE habit of numbering our days is a very admirable one. To do it rightly a man needs to be taught of God; and if we have not been so taught, it is well to offer the prayer, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Some men number their cattle, number their acres, number their pounds, but do not number their days, or, if they do, they fail to draw the inference from them which both reason and grace suggest—that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. It is not wisdom to try to seem younger than you are, though I have known many attempt it. I have marked between census and census that the ages of certain persons have hardly increased ten years, as I thought they would have done by the lapse of time. The age of many whom we admire is a mystery inscrutable. What there can be to be ashamed of in advancing years I am at a loss to know, for old age commands reverence, and not ridicule. Wherefore sorrow because another year of trial is over, another year of labour ended, another milestone on the road to heaven left behind? Instead of regretting that we are so far on the voyage to the fair haven, we may rather rejoice and make our years at least as many as we can. If we pretend to be more juvenile than we are, uncharitable persons may possibly attribute it to vanity; it is a pity to give them such an opportunity. At the same time, ripe years are not to be trifled with. We have known some who have treated the fact that they are advancing in life with unbecoming levity; their grey hairs show that they are nearing the bounds of life, but they are as thoughtless as if they were yet in their minority, and so they are an incongruous mixture of the weakness of age, and the frivolity of youth. It is well to keep a cheerful heart to the last hour, and no man has so much reason for doing so as a believer in Jesus; but at the same time it is surely time

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to be solemnly earnest when one has passed the prime of life. Wisdom dictates that then, if never before, there should be a grave consideration of eternal realities, earth should be more under foot, and heaven should be more in the heart. Every year should increase our sense of the certainty, value, and nearness of eternal things. "Tis time to live if I grow old." Works for God among our fellow-men will soon be impossible to us; let us be diligent in them while as yet our sun is above the horizon. Now, if ever, we should redeem the time, because the days are evil.

In the very middle of life, when strength is in our bones, and we have the grandest possibilities of vigorous service, it is well for us to be fully alive to the highest interests and purposes, and not to be spending a dreamy existence, as if we were mere lotus eaters, born into a garden of poppies to sleep the livelong day. We have something better to do than to flit among the flowers like butterflies, with nothing particular to care about, and no eternal future within the range of our thoughts or hopes.

I purpose this morning to speak as a man of forty years to others of my own standing, but much which is spoken will be appropriate to my seniors, and applicable also to the younger ones of my audience.

Forty years of mercy suggest many thoughts concerning *the past*, teach much that will be of use to us for *the present*, and I think also should influence us aright as to *the future*.

I. First, then, let us look back upon *THE PAST* in the light of the text. "The Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing."

What strikes me in Moses' review is this, *the prominence which he gives to God in it*. Here let me note that our own retrospect of the past will, if we are genuine Christians, have in it many bright lights of the conspicuous presence of God, making the pathway here and there like holy ground. The ungodly man, of course, leads a godless life; as God is not in all his thoughts, so God does not appear to him in all his ways; but to the godly God's hand is plain. Look back, believer, and note that to you the existence of God has not been a theory, but a fact observed, and verified by actual experience. Can you not recall many occasions in which the Lord hath as certainly manifested himself to you as ever he appeared to Moses at the burning bush, or to Joshua outside the walls of Jericho, or to Solomon by night, or to the three holy children in the fiery furnace? Do you not remember that marvellous revelation of himself to you when you were converted? What hand was that which took the rein and curbed that stubborn will of yours? Could any power less than omnipotent have so completely turned the course of your life? Do you recollect the consecrated hour when Jesus met with you and absolved you from the past, and accepted you as his disciple? Ah, they may tell us there are no miracles now-a-days, but to each Christian his own conversion is a conspicuous miracle, and will ever so remain; he will never be able to forget that then he came into actual contact with the unseen God and felt his hand, yea, knew it beyond feeling, for it was

not a matter of the senses, our spirit came directly into actual contact with the eternal Spirit, and our soul was bound up in the bundle of life with the soul of the Lord our God. Many days with some of us have passed since then, but they have brought with them fuller displays of the divine power. In seasons of communion have we not spoken with the Lord as a man speaketh with his friend, if not absolutely face to face yet marvellously like it? Have we not had answers to prayer which we dare not tell, because they are too amazing for others to believe, though they are treasured memories to ourselves? It would be casting pearls before swine to speak to the ungodly of the Lord's unveilings of his face to his beloved ones; these things are secrets of the Lord which are with them that fear him, things unlawful for a man to utter, but never to be erased from our remembrance. Have we not passed through remarkable circumstances, in which the right hand of the Lord has been as clearly seen as our troubles themselves? "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him." Brought, perhaps, by our own fault into grave difficulties, we have seen a plain path before us in answer to prayer. Plunged into the sea, like Jonah, by our own waywardness, yet we have been carried safely to the dry land to sing "Salvation is of the Lord."

These forty years we look back upon with sacred delight, tracing the wells of Elim and the fruit-bearing palms, the pools in the valley of Baca, and the places of encampment in the desert; and if to nobody else, certainly to us, there is an overruling providence and a bountiful God. We have been like Hagar in the wilderness, ready to perish, but Jehovah has shown us a well of refreshment; and we have said, "Thou God seest me." Blessed be the name of the Lord for this! Let us magnify him this morning that our life has not been without flashes of glory from his loving presence. Our Shepherd has not left us to wander alone; our heavenly Friend has been better to us than a brother, and has manifested himself unto us as he doth not unto the world. In this we will glory; even as Paul gloried in the revelation which he had received, so also will we rejoice in the displays of the divine favour which we have beheld.

In reading over the retrospect of forty years in the wilderness which the text contains, notice next that a very leading point is *the blessing which God gave*. I have read this verse over a great many times to discover any allusion to the sin of Israel, but I cannot perceive any, for it begins, "The Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand," and it *deals not with man's sin, but with God's blessing*. As with Israel so with us; in our life the most remarkable fact has been the blessing of God. He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, blessed us all ways and blessed us always; blessed us beyond conception, blessed us exceeding abundantly above what we asked or even thought, and beyond what we can now remember. He has blessed us like a God. Our text says he has blessed all the works of our hand. I suppose that alludes to all that Israel had a right to do; the Lord multiplied their cattle, he increased their substance, he guided them in their marches, he protected them in their encampments. There were some things in which he did not bless them. They wanted to go up into the promised land against his

commandment, and the Amalekites smote them; he did not bless them there. I thank God this morning, brethren, that he does not bless the sins of his people, for if he did it would bring on them the tremendous curse of being happy in the ways of evil. We have made our mistakes, and for those mistakes the Lord has laid his hand on us, armed with a rod, which has chastened us and restored us to the path of righteousness again. But in what was legitimate and right we have some of us to record that the Lord has uniformly blessed the work of our hands. The work of some of us has been to preach his gospel, and if the Lord had given us a few score conversions we would have loved him for ever; but inasmuch as he has given us thousands upon thousands of conversions, how shall we find language with which to praise him! He has blessed the work of our hands, so that a vast church has been gathered, and many smaller ones have sprung from it; one enterprise has been taken up, and then another; one labour which seemed beyond our power has been achieved, and then another, and yet another; and at his feet we lay the crown. I must confess my Lord's special favour towards me, the very stones in the street would cry out against me if I did not; he has indeed blessed all the work of my hands. Brethren, you have had a share in the blessing, have a share also in the praising. Sometimes the work of our hands has appeared to crumble to pieces, but then it has been rebuilt ere long in a better style; enemies have arisen, and they have been exceedingly violent, only to fulfil some special purpose of God, and increase our blessing against their wills; sickness has come only to yield discipline, we have been made weak that we might be strong, and brought to death's door that we might know more of the divine life. Glory be to God, our life has been all blessing from beginning to end, there has been no exceptional event all along; ever since we knew him he has dealt out blessing and blessing and blessing, and never a syllable of cursing. He has fulfilled to us the word, "Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee."

Again, brethren, in our retrospect of the past, we should notice *the perfection of the Lord's sympathetic care*. Observe the words: "He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness." He has known our rough paths and our smooth ways, the weary trudging and the joyous marching, he has known it all, and not merely known it in the sense of omniscience, but known it in the sense of sympathy. As David puts it: "Thou hast known my soul in adversity." Thou hast tenderly entered into my griefs and woes, and borne my burdens and my cares. What say you, brethren and sisters, has it not been so? Is not that witness true—"in all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them"? Is not this also true,—"I have made and I will bear, even I will carry"? "He bore them on eagle's wings, and brought them to himself." Has he not often done so, and have we not to sing to-day of a dear Father's love, so tender, so considerate, that we can only wonder at it, and love in return? You have had great losses, some of you, the dearest ones on earth, for whom you sorrowed much and justly, have been removed; heart-breaking bereavements have happened, yet your hearts are not broken, neither are you down with too much sorrow, because underneath you are the ever-

sting arms, and "as your days so has your strength been." Before some of you many doors have shut, but God has opened others. The brook Cherith has been dried, but there has been sustenance found for you in the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil somewhere else. Let us bless the generous sympathy which has known all our walking through this great wilderness.

But I must pass on. We have had also what is better than this during our forty years, *the special presence of God*. "These forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee." Adored be his name for that! He has not been ashamed to be with us, though we have been despised and ridiculed. Whenever we have prayed we have had audience with him; when we have worked we have seen his mysterious hand working with us; when we have trembled we have felt the tender arms sustaining us; when we have been in bodily pain, he has made our bed in our sickness; when we have felt the fiery furnace of trial he has kept us alive amidst the glowing coals, delivering us from even the smell of fire by his own presence. The best of all is God with us, and in this sign we conquer.

Again, we have had much cause to bless the Lord for *the abundance of his supplies*. Note those four words, "Thou hast lacked nothing." Some things which we could have wished for we have not received, and we are glad they were denied us. Children would have too many sweets if they could, and then they would be surfeited or be ill; we have not been pampered with dangerous dainties, but we have received necessities, and have lacked nothing. Walking on in the path of providence, trusting in the Lord, what have we lacked? We have known a few pinches, even as the children of Israel lacked water for a moment, but very soon were refreshed with water from the rock; we may have wanted bread for an hour, as they did when they were sick enough to say, "Has the Lord brought us out of Egypt that we may die in the wilderness?" but the clouds before long dropped with a mysterious shower of food for them; and ere long providence has applied us also. Our times of straitness have been occasions for appeal to the faithful promise, and we have never appealed in vain. "Thou hast lacked nothing." "No good thing will God withhold from them that walk uprightly." Everything that would be, in theallest sense, a "good thing," God has given us. If it would be a good thing that we should never again be tempted; if it were a good thing that the devil were buried, if it were a good thing for us to go to heaven at once, we should have all these things; but then there are certain far-reaching purposes to be answered, and to reach them the Lord makes even evils work for the highest good in the ultimate issues of his grand designs. We ought to magnify the Lord that we have lacked nothing. Oh for a song of praise for forty years of mercies—some of you can say sixty and seventy years of mercies! Praise him, all ye saints! "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

II. But now, brethren, we must take the second head, which is,—*forty years in the wilderness should teach us much of service for the present*. I do not say that it will do so, for we do not all grow *less* as we grow older, but it ought to be so. Some of us were

born with fools' caps, which we find it hard to pull off. Folly is bound up in the heart of many a man, and it takes much of the rod to whip it out of him. Experience is a noble teacher, but we are dull scholars; yet at any rate we ought to have learned to *continue trusting in God*. After forty years of the goodness of your covenant God, do you mean to look to an arm of flesh, my brother? You have been so kindly treated by your Master and Saviour, would you now leave him for earthly friendship? Do you want a better God? Do you desire a better confidence? Merchants generally *continue* in that business which pays them well, for they feel that they might go further and fare worse. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." Plough this field, brother, you will never reap such a harvest anywhere else. Dig in this mine: there is no such gold elsewhere; for the gold of this land is good, and its wealth bringeth no sorrow with it. As Boaz said to Ruth, so say I to you, "Glean not in any other field." When Noah was in the ark the Lord shut him in; may he shut you in so fast that you may never leave your confidence in Jesus. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever." Ye have found yourselves so blessed and benefited by trusting in him hitherto, stand fast in it, and be not moved away from the hope of your calling. Be not so foolish, having been in the Spirit, as to seek to be made perfect by the flesh. Having walked so far, and so safely, by faith, do not attempt to walk by sight, or by the deeds of the law. Having found that to trust in the Lord is better than to put confidence in princes, do not fawn at the feet of the proud. You have lived well enough upon the bread of your Father's house, do not desire the delicate morsels of those who please the flesh. Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and shun the yoke of bondage. You should at least have learned this from forty years' experience of the blessedness of resting in the Lord.

Experience should also give us *greater ease in confiding in the Lord*. Use is said to be second nature, but in your case grace has given you in very deed a real second nature, and this by use should have grown stronger and more prevalent. Faith is an untried path when we begin, but after so many years of testing God in all sorts of ways, in all kinds of circumstances, it ought now to be as easy to confide in the Lord as it is for a child to trust in a tender parent. Is it so? I fear not. Our long-tried confidence in God ought not now to be staggered by a little difficulty, as it was at the first. When fresh water sailors first go to sea, every capful of wind frightens them; and if the vessel lurches a little they cry, "She will certainly go over;" but the old tar, who knows what a storm means, thanks God for the wind, for it will drive the ship more rapidly into port, and he never minds a lurch or two: he has his sea legs by this time; and so men who have been blessed of God for forty years ought to be equally at ease. We should be able to say, "I do trust him, and I will. I must believe him; wherefore should I doubt him?" Nothing has ever occurred, as far as I am concerned, for forty years which could justify me in a mistrust of my God: and if, beloved brethren, you and I never doubt our God till we have a reason for it, we shall dwell in the unbroken rest of faith. Let the roots of

with take stronger hold, that like a cedar in Lebanon it may smile at the tempest.

Forty years of divine faithfulness should teach us also *a surer, sicker, calmer, and more joyous expectation of immediate aid in all cases of strait and trial*: we should learn not to be flurried and worried because the herds are cut off from the stall, and the harvest is withered, for we know from abundant proofs that "The Lord will provide." Have we come to a dead lift? Let us bless God for it, for now he will make bare his arm. He would have left you to lift your load if you could have lifted it, but now your extremity has come his opportunity has come also. I am often glad when I feel that none but my Lord can carry me through, for I am certain of his help. If we have still a batch of dough in the kneading trough which we brought out of Egypt the windows of heaven will not yet be opened, but when the last little cake has been baked the manna will fall around the camp. As long as we can feel the bottom of the river we have not reached the best waters to swim in. When the barley loaves and the few small fishes are all broken, then the miracle of multiplying begins. My brethren, watch and wait for the Lord, and expect him as confidently as you look for light at the hour of dawn. Far sooner may the sun forget his rising than the Lord forget his promise to succour his people in the hour of need. "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him."

Forty years of blessing should teach each of us *to believe in holy activity*. "The Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand." Some people believe in God's blessing the dreams and theories of their heads, and their prayers are unattended by action. They believe in his blessing them when they are scheming and putting fine plans on paper, or when they meet at a conference to talk about how to do Christian work. I believe in God's blessing the actual work of our hand; he waters not the seed which we talk of sowing, but that which we actually scatter. If people believed in this, and just did one tithe of what they propose, it would be much better than the endless leagues of talking, and religious dissipation, which threaten to become the bane of the church. The schemes for evangelising districts, towns, cities, and the whole world, are so very numerous that there is no need to make any more; and were half the time thus vainly spent given to diligent labour there would be much more of a blessing bestowed upon the sons of men. Meet and confer by all means, but do not think that this is a very great matter for congratulation; the real winning of souls is far better. You will find, as a rule, in business that you will not get much more than you really work for; and you will find in the things of God that the blessing comes to diligence, to zeal, to earnestness, to painstaking, for God blesses the work of our hands. Men of forty, it is time for us to be fully at work! Moses was forty years old when he went down to visit his brethren in Egypt; then he tried to turn to practical use the former forty years of education in Pharaoh's court; and though he had to wait forty years more, it was no fault of his. Joshua said, "Forty years was I when Moses sent me to spy out the land." You cannot hope to live as long as these men did, and therefore it is quite time to begin earnest work,

for you are in your prime, and will never be more fit for usefulness. If you have not begun before, let your consecration be at its full to-day. The Lord has blessed what you have done with a right motive, will it not be well to do more? Men in trade when they find they make gains increase their business, and when we find God blesses us in what we do, let us do more for him. We must not slacken our zeal: it is a dreadful thing when men begin to do less while their natural force is unabated, it looks as if their hearts were growing cold. How commonly do we hear people say, "We have served an apprenticeship at the work, and now we will leave the younger folks to go on." Just when you begin to be capable of doing the work well you leave it, and the Lord has to be served by another set of makeshifts. Man alive! stick to your work as long as you are alive. Surely work for Jesus deserves our maturest and best instructed years, and it ought not to be left to the mere boys and girls. The young people deserve great credit for taking to the work so heartily, but surely men and women in their prime are none too good to be enlisted, and the fulness of their strength is not too much to expect for Jesus.

Brethren, forty years' experience ought to have taught us to *avoid many of the faults into which we fell in our early days*. It is a great pity when advancing age teaches men rather to avoid their virtues than their follies. It is not at all unusual for zeal to grow chill as men advance in life. "Ah," says the brother, "I am not so hot-headed as I was." No, brother; nor yet so hot-hearted. "Ah," says another, "I was very zealous in my time." Is not this, also, your time? Show us now what your boasted zeal was like, will you? We should be glad to see a specimen of it. Are you not ashamed to confess that you are backsliding in heart? Can you bear the prospect of taking your flight when your heart is in a wintry condition? As you come nearer heaven ought you not to be more heavenly? A zeal which becomes weaker in proportion to our age, looks very like a merely animal excitement which decays with nature. The earnestness of grace defies the decline of years, and it brings forth fruit in old age to show that the Lord is upright. No, we must learn not to avoid excellencies, but to avoid follies; and where we have burned our fingers once we must not burn them again, but just keep clear of what we now discover to have been excrescences, though perhaps at the time we thought them beauties. May God grant, dear friends, in all of us, that, as the Israel which came out of Egypt died in the wilderness, little by little at each halting-place, so in us may the old Egyptian nature daily die and be buried. Have you ever thought of it? The march of the children of Israel could have been tracked in the wilderness by their graves, there remained a cemetery wherever there had been an encampment. Blessed be God, our march to heaven may be traced by graves, too, for we die daily if we are in a right state, and the old man is crucified with Christ, and we obey the command, "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth." Blessed shall the day be when the last grave shall have been dug, and the last evil passion shall have been buried for ever, and the new race—the new Israel—shall enter into the promised land.

Beloved, there is another thing which forty years suggest to me.

You will have observed that the text mentions twice "The Lord thy God." All through the chapter it is always that—"Jehovah thy God." Here we have mention of his covenant relationship, in which he is ever most dear to us. Shall we not at this time *renew our own personal covenant, and take our God to be ours afresh?* We read that Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebecca. Let us have a new wedding-day ourselves, and give ourselves over again to the Husband of our souls, even Jesus the Wellbeloved. Are you tired of your Lord, any of you? Do you wish to sue out a divorce? "No," say you, "No, no; but would God I were more enamoured of him, and that my whole self were more completely his." Let this be a day of re-consecration.

"Tis done—the great transaction's done
I am my Lord's, and he is mine:
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.
High heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
'Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

May that be the case with each one of us. May we offer ourselves anew to Jehovah this day, and take Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be our God for ever and ever.

III. A great deal more might be said, but we have not time; and, therefore, we must go on to the third head, which concerns THE FUTURE.

Having come so far on our journey as to have reached forty years, we are bound to feel a powerful influence upon us as to the future. How? I will borrow our remarks from the context. Read in the second chapter, second verse, "And the Lord spake unto me, saying, Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn ye northward." What way was northward, then? Why, toward Canaan. Forty years wandering up and down in the wilderness is enough, now turn your faces towards Canaan and *march heavenward*. Beloved friends, it is time we all had our faces turned heavenward more completely. We have not always had our conversation in heaven as we should have done. Some of our faculties have been taken up with inferior things, and we have looked towards Egypt, but we have compassed this mountain long enough: it is time that now we concentrated all our powers and turned them all straight away to the Zion which is above, and to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of the just made perfect. Our window should now be opened towards Jerusalem. Forty years of the world, why it is forty years of banishment! And, as we are soon to have done with it, let us up and away to the hills of frankincense. They tell me that when sailors years ago used to go to India they would give as a toast when they left, "To our friends astern;" but when they had reached half way on the voyage they changed it, and it was "To our friends ahead." When we get to forty we may reckon we are probably more than mid-way on our voyage: we are bound, therefore, to remember our friends ahead. We have a large company waiting for us of dear ones that have gone before us; indeed, the

aged have a majority of their friends on the other side Jordan. Let us salute them—

"E'en now by faith we join our hands
With those that went before,
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
Upon the eternal shore."

Let us pledge our friends ahead, and henceforth let us forget the things that are behind and press forward to that which is before, leaving earth and earthly matters more and more, and yielding ourselves more fully to the cords which draw us towards the celestial country. Let us begin more fully that holy, happy, praiseful life which is akin to that of heaven. Is not this a good suggestion? The time past may suffice us to have wrought the will of the flesh, now let us cry, "heavenward, ho." Pull up the anchor, spread the sails, and let us away to the fair country whither Jesus has gone before us.

The next thing we should learn is *indifference to this world's heritage*. The next verse says, "Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you; take ye good heed unto yourselves, therefore: meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession." Esau sold his heritage, and had his mess of pottage, let him have it; keep you the birthright, and never think of putting your spoon into his mess. The world is for worldlings. What do you want with it? God does not intend you to have your portion in this life, why do you lust after it? He has appointed a better rest for you; are you not content to have it so? Perhaps the Israelites would have liked to have taken Edom. "No," says God, "Edom is not yours, Canaan is yours, go on, do not meddle with Esau's cities." When you see worldlings very happy in their mirth, do not envy them, let them have their portion. I never envy a horse his oats and his beans, he likes them, and I could not eat them, why should I wish to be a dog in the manger? There are pleasures in this world for men of the world; poor things, let them have them. As for you, you do not want them and cannot enjoy them; let them alone, and do not meddle with them. If you can bless them do so, but by no means allow them to imagine that you envy them, for your position is infinitely better than theirs. Better to be God's dog than the devil's darling. The best estate of the ungodly is far below our lowest condition: when we consider their end, any little envy which might arise at the sight of their prosperity will turn to horror at their doom.

Let us learn from the past to cultivate *independence of spirit*. "Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink." They were not to plunder the country, or make imperious demands, neither were they to act as paupers and beg anything from Edom. What they needed they were to pay for in good money. The Edomites no doubt thought them a mob of escaped slaves, as poor as poverty itself, half starved, and miserable; they were to let them see that they were nothing of the kind. They were to pay in full for all they had. It is a grand

when a man can exhibit the princely independence which
 am showed towards the king of Sodom. That little potentate
 "Give me the persons and take the goods to thyself." "No,"
 Abraham, "not I, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abraham
 I will not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet of thee."
 brethren, if a man has been helped of God to live for forty
 lacking nothing, and has walked uprightly, surely it would now
 scandalous thing if he were to do anything whatever which would
 questionable as to integrity, or might savour of confidence in man.
 indeed, a man of God who has learned to walk uprightly, and no
 leans upon the creature, nor practises policy to win his way.
 said a minister to me, "if I were to preach in your bold style I
 lose some of my richest people, and offend the rest." And if
 would he not have an easy conscience, and is not that worth
 than money? The minister who cares for any man's opinion
 he is doing his duty is unworthy of his office. The servant of
 must not be the servant of men. The only man whom God will
 a he who fears no man's face, and resolves that whether he offends
 uses he will clear his soul from the blood of all men :—

"Fearless myself, a dying man,
 Of dying man's esteem,
 I preach as though I ne'er might preach again,
 A dying man to dying men."

the Israelites lived for forty years on manna, and shall they bow
 the Edomites, and like paupers cry, "Please give us bread"?
 e favoured feasters at heaven's table can afford to say, "We will
 n, we will owe you nothing." God give you independence of
 my brethren! Many have forgotten what it means; they will
 rthing for the sake of custom, or credit, or to get into society;
 they grow rich they can no longer attend a Nonconformist place
 ship; for the sake of being patted on the back by nobodies they
 p their fathers' religion and renounce their principles, if indeed
 ver had any.

e again, after forty years in the wilderness God would have his
 learn *generosity of spirit*. The Edomites were very much
 of the Israelites, and would, no doubt, have bribed them to let
 alone, but Moses in effect says, "Do not take anything from
 you have no need to do so, for you have never lacked anything,
 d has been with you. They are afraid of you; you might take
 ou pleased from them, but do not touch even the water from
 wells without payment." Oh, that we had a generous spirit, that
 e not for oppressing others in any degree whatever, feeling that
 e too much already given us by God to be wanting to tax any
 r our own gain.

spirit of *freedom from murmuring* should be in us after forty
 f blessing. Jarchi tells us that this exhortation meant that
 ere not to pretend to be poor. You know how many do so
 t is likely to save their pockets. When the tribes came to the
 tes they were not to say to them, "We are poor people, and have
 ey; you must not charge too much for the water, for we cannot

afford to pay you at full rates." No, no, no; it must not be. Supplied by the infinite God, the children of heaven dare not pretend to be poor. Yet we find professors doing this commonly; if they have a very good business year, they say, "We have done very middling;" and if trade is rather dull, they cry, "Things are at a dreadful pass; trade is decreasing, we cannot make a living at all." Very seldom do I meet with a man who cheerfully confesses "the Lord is blessing and prospering me, and I am perfectly contented. I want for nothing but more grace with which to bless the Lord all day long." This is the kind of talk for Christian men. They are princes, let them speak a princely language. To grumble and complain is like a rich man's putting on old and slovenly garments, that he may deceive by the pretence of want, and escape from bearing his due share of the public burdens. The Holy Ghost enables the believer to boast in the Lord, and glory in his name. I am not going to give my Master a bad name. He has treated me infinitely better than ever I expected or deserved. He is a good God. I feel it to be a good thing to live, since he has accepted me in Christ; and a blessed thing to be on earth, because the Holy Spirit enables me to serve Jesus. I am not going to stand here and find fault with my Lord, or represent myself as a poor miserable wretch, oppressed by a hard taskmaster. My Lord has been good, and only good, to me, and I will praise and magnify his name. Wherein we are poor let us confess it, but wherein God in his infinite grace has made us rich in Christ Jesus, let us glory in it.

Lastly, we ought for the future to show *more confidence in God* if we have had forty years of his love: we should have more confidence in working for him that he will bless us, more confidence as to our personal weakness that he will strengthen us, more confidence as to the unknown future that through the great and terrible wilderness he will be with us, and that through the last cold stream he will still be our companion; more confidence that we shall behold the light of his countenance, and more confidence as to the supply of all our needs, for as we have lacked nothing, so all things shall be freely supplied till we cross the river and eat the old corn of the land.

To gather all up in one word, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Would God you were all his people; would God you all trusted him for all things, for those who do so shall find good. The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Deuteronomy viii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—Psalm 23 (Version III.),
152, 214.



Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JESUS NEAR BUT UNRECOGNISED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But their eyes were holden that they should not know him."—Luke xxiv. 16.

THE Lord may be present with his people, and yet they may not be conscious of it. They may be conscious of the effect produced thereby, but not of the fact itself. When the Lord visited Abraham in his tent on the plains of Mamre, at the first, at least, Abraham thought he was receiving a wayfaring man, and so he entertained the angel of the covenant unawares. When the Lord appeared unto Jacob he rose up from the vision, and said, "Surely God was in this place, and I knew it not." Afterwards at the brook Jabbok, when the covenant angel wrestled with him, Jacob was not aware of the exact character of the mysterious personage, for he said, "Tell me thy name." He did not understand who it was with whom he wept, and made supplication, and prevailed. The same is true of Joshua. He saw a man standing with his sword drawn in his hand, and he challenged him, mistaking him for a warrior; he did not recognise the person of his Lord until he said, "Nay, but as captain of the Lord's host am I come." It is possible, then, for saints to be favoured very remarkably with the presence of their Master, and yet for some cause or other they may not know that he is specially near them. So was it in the case before us, which let us consider.

I. We shall note, first, REASONS WHY, IN THE VERY PRESENCE OF THEIR MASTER, SAINTS MAY NOT KNOW THAT HE IS NEAR.

The reason in this case was twofold; first, because *their eyes were holden*; and secondly, because, as Mark tells us, *he appeared unto them in another form*. We must not suppose either of these reasons to be untrue, but that they are both true, and that the two evangelists have

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thus given us the whole of the truth, one taking note of one part of it, and the other of the other. The first reason, then, why these good men did not perceive the presence of their Master was that "*their eyes were holden.*" There was a blinding cause *in them*. What was it? We cannot dare to say. Where Scripture does not strictly inform us, it is not for us to dogmatise. By some mysterious operation, their eyes, which were able to see other things, were not able to detect the presence of their Master, but they thought him to be some common traveller. Still we are permitted to say that in their case, and in the case of a great many disciples, eyes have been holden through *sorrow*. They were very grieved for they had lost their Master, he was gone they knew not where. They would have been glad even if they could have found his body, but certain women had gone to the sepulchre, and though they told a wonderful story about a vision of angels, yet to these men it sounded like a knell in their ears, "for him they found not." Ah, there is no sorrow to a Christian like the loss of his Master's presence. May you and I never be able to bear it with composure. "The days shall come when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, then shall they fast." Fast, indeed! There is no fast like that which sets in when those who have once seen the Bridegroom's beauty, and tasted of the love that is better than wine, have to cry out, "O that I knew where I might find him!" That careless spouse who had slept and would not open to her beloved for a while, when her heart was touched and her bowels were moved for him, rose up and opened to her beloved, and searched through the streets of the city, for she could not rest until she found him, and she made every watchman of the walls to hear her question: "Have ye seen him whom my soul loveth?" Sorrow will unsettle the judgment. Even holy sorrow for sin, and grief for the absence of the Master, may sometimes put a mote into the eye and destroy its clear vision. Even tears of repentance have prevented men from seeing truths which might have made their hearts glad.

Again, in their case, in addition to the mysterious operation which held their eyes, which we do not attempt to account for, we have no doubt their eyes were holden with *unbelief*. Had they been expecting to see Jesus, methinks they would have recognised him. If they had gone to Emmaus fully persuaded that he was alive somewhere upon the earth, as soon as they had seen him approach, they would at least have said, "Perhaps this is the Master; perhaps even now he is coming to us." They knew that his delights were with the sons of men, so that he would not long conceal himself from his beloved while he was on earth; they knew also that he loved his own to the end, and would love them still; they might, therefore, have felt sure that he would come to meet them; and had they been believing and expecting, they would, probably, have discovered him at once. Whether it be so or not I am sure, dear brethren, that our unbelief has often hidden the Lord from our eyes. What might we have known of our Lord by this time—what might we have tasted and handled of him by this time if it had not been for our unbelief? He might say to some of us, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?" By reason of our unbelief we have not dived into the mysteries of his

But, we have not understood the fulness of his love. Oh, for more faith! Faith has the eagle's eye: it can see where other eyes cannot penetrate. Oh, for the eye of love! the dove's eye of love, by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set; for faith and love together make up a blessed pair of optics which can see the Lord, even when clouds and darkness are round about him.

Whatever may have been mysterious about the holding of the disciples' eyes, they were also somewhat holden by *ignorance*. They had failed to see what is plain enough in Scripture, that the Messiah must suffer, bleed, and die. They had their sacred books, and yet were so little acquainted with their real meaning that, albeit Christ is in every page of the Old Testament, yet they did not perceive him there; and so, not knowing that all this must be as it had happened, and expecting something very different, and more in accordance with the traditional views of their race, they did not recognise their Master. If it was not so with them, it is certainly so with many of God's people. Some professors, I speak it with sorrow, do not know more than the most elementary doctrines of the gospel. With the exception of knowing themselves sinners and Christ a Saviour, they know nothing. Justification, in the full glory of it, is hid from their eyes. The work of the Holy Spirit they do not consider; the fulness of the union of the child of God with Christ, and the glory that is to come thereof, which already casts a halo about the saints, they have not perceived. They do not study the word so as to enter into its depths. They are afraid of some doctrines because they are said to be "High Calvinism," and of other doctrines because they are denounced as "Arminianism." They are frightened into joining a party instead of taking the truth as God has revealed it, and beholding Jesus sitting upon the truth like a king upon a throne of ivory. Beloved, the scales of ignorance have often closed the eyes of the saints, and it is well when the Holy Spirit opens our understandings to receive the Scriptures, and enables us to see Jesus Christ as he truly is in the field of the Word of God, like a precious treasure hidden therein. Thus Jesus may be with his people, but they may not see him because of something in themselves.

At other times they may not see him, because of something in the *faster*. Mark, as I have told you, says he appeared unto them "*in another form*." I suppose he means in a form in which they had not seen him before. The Lord Jesus Christ has appeared at times in the Old Testament to his servants, but on each occasion in a different form. To Abraham, who was a stranger and a wayfaring man in the land, he appeared as a pilgrim. To Jacob, who was a wrestler with his brother, he appeared as a wrestler. To Joshua, who was a soldier, fighting to conquer Canaan, he appeared as a soldier. To the holy children who were in the furnace he appeared as one walking amidst the burning coals. He puts himself into fellowship with his people. So here the two travellers were overtaken by a third traveller; he appeared to them in that form in which they themselves were. As he sought to make them like himself, he begins by making himself like them.

As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, so he also himself took part of the same." Jesus condescends to our condition and our circumstances. There is no position into which Providence may cast

us but what Jesus can sympathise with us in it. We see him best under certain characters when we ourselves are in that form of character. Beloved, it may be you are a beginner in grace, and hitherto the Lord Jesus has appeared to you with a smile upon his face as a gentle shepherd leading the lambs, but possibly for a while he is gone, or you think so, for you feel his rebuke in your soul, as if he were saying to you, "O fool and slow of heart." You conclude within yourself, "This cannot be Christ, I thought he was always a feeder of lambs." Yes, so he is, but he sometimes comes with a scourge of small cords to chase out buyers and sellers from his temple; he is the same Christ, only you have not before seen him in that character. Perhaps you have only seen Jesus as your joy and consolation; under that aspect may you always see him, but, remember, "He shall sit as a refiner; he shall purify the sons of Levi." When you are in the furnace, suffering affliction and trial and depression of spirit, the refiner is Christ, the same loving Christ in a new character. Hitherto you have seen Christ as breaking the bread of life to you, and giving you to drink of the water of life, but you must yet learn that his fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge the floor of your heart. He is not another Christ, but he puts on another aspect, and exercises another office. At first poor sinners are content to see Jesus as their priest who cleanses them from sin; they must go on to see him as their King who conquers them by the sacred arms of love, and they must also know him as their prophet, leading them into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. They must not wonder if he appears unto them in another form while they are learning more of him; this kind of sacred philosophy comes by experience, for how often do we find precious children of God distressed because they have not to-day the same sweets they used to have. At first we give little children such food as will be easily assimilated; they have nothing else but milk. By-and-by hard crusts are given them, for there are wisdom teeth to be cut. Suppose when we give them more solid food, they began crying out for the milk again, should we give it them? The Lord does not wish you always to be babes, he would have you grow into men in Christ Jesus; and though Christ is always your food whether he comes to you as milk or as meat, yet still he will not always be milk to you lest you should remain a babe. He means to be meat to you that your senses may be exercised, that you may be able to understand the stronger and deeper truths of the kingdom of God. Do not, therefore, be astonished; or, if you are, let this always comfort you, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" and though he may change the form under which he manifests himself, yet he is the immutable Lord of love.

You have thus heard two reasons why saints may have Christ with them, and yet may not discern him; first, because of themselves—their eyes are holden; and, next, because of himself—he may appear in another form.

II. Secondly, let us speak of *the manners of the saints when they are in such a case*. When their Master is with them and they do not know him, how do they conduct themselves?

First, *they are sad*; because the presence of Christ, if Christ be un-

known, is not comfortable, though it may be edifying. It may be for rebuke, as it was to them; but it certainly is not for consolation. For joy we must have a known Christ. Saints are always downcast when Jesus is not known to be present; and, as I have said before, they may never be otherwise than unhappy if our Lord be hidden from them. I can understand the child of God saying, "I am out of fellowship with Christ," but I cannot understand his saying that calmly and deliberately, without tears, without deep regret and intense repentance. I can comprehend that the heir of heaven may walk in darkness and have no light; but I cannot understand how he can be at home in darkness. Set a bird of the day flying by night, and see how it flutters, and how uneasy it is. Go with a candle, if you will, to any place where a number of birds have made their nests, and see how strangely bewildered they are. The only bird that will be at home in the dark is the owl, the bird of the night; and if any one of you can be happy without your Master you are of the night. If you can be content without the sunlight of Jesus' presence, depend upon it you are one of the bats of the cavern; you are not one of the eagles of the day. God grant us to be like these disciples—sad, doubly sad, if we do not know our Lord to be with us.

Next, these disciples, though they did not know that their Master was there, *conversed together*,—a good example for all Christians. Whether you are in the full joy of your faith or not, speak often one to another. He who is strong will help the weak brother; if two talk together, if one shall trip perhaps the other will not, and so he will have a hand to spare to support his friend. Even if both saints are unhappy, yet some good result will come from mutual sympathy. The one is saying, "I have lost my Master," and the other replies, "I have lost my Master too," and they will both know that they are not the only persons in such a case; and that is some help to a man in sorrow. Sometimes even a gleam of light, such as will arise from the fact that another is in the same plight, may be useful. Christian people, commune together, but let your communications always be like these which are recorded in this chapter. Speak of *him*, talk of *him*, what you know of *him*, of your sorrows about *him*, even of your neglects of *him*, of your ill treatment of *him*, your sins against *him*. Talk of these things one to the other, for so long as they are about *him* it will be good even to confess your faults one to another, for it will lead you to pray one for another, and to join your prayers together, so that there will be greater strength in the petitions; or if two of you are agreed, you know what power that sweet agreement has with heaven. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another." A blessed practice, an ancient practice, an edifying practice, a God-honouring practice, one which so pleased God that he turned eavesdropper—came under the window to listen to what they said, and took his note-book and recorded it, "a book of remembrance as written"; and he has published it, and given his blessing to "those that fear the Lord and that think upon his name." Beloved, even if you are out of fellowship with Jesus, do not forsake the assembly of God's people. Though you may feel unworthy to speak with them, yet sit among them, and perhaps there you will find your Master.

Note, next, that these disciples, in addition to communicating with one another, were *ready to be communed with by good men*. When this new pilgrim on the road came up and asked them a question, they were not shy, they were ready to give an answer; they poured out their hearts to him, and he talked to them, and they were soon on the way to being instructed. It is well for Christians to be willing to receive truth, not merely through their own immediate companions, but from others who fear the Lord, who perhaps may have looked at things from a different point, and who may have received clearer light. These two disciples were communicative. It is a pity that Christian people so often shut themselves up within themselves. This is a particular fault of English people; you shall travel all over the world, in the same railway carriage with an Englishman, and he will not say a word to you. I am sure Christian people would get much good from one another if they would not be so distant. Many precious children of God have sat side by side by the hour together, and out of undue reserve, which they have thought most proper, they have failed to communicate, and have missed the opportunity of a sacred commerce of thought and experience which would have enriched them both. Be ready to communicate (not, of course, being indiscreet therein, for there is such a thing as casting pearls before swine), using a heavenly prudence, be free to speak to those who are willing to converse concerning Christ. John Bunyan in his "Pilgrim's Progress" has a very witty and pithy piece about Mr. Talkative, who joined with the pilgrims; and, if you remember, he would soon have wearied them with his chat, had not Christian and Hopeful adopted a capital expedient for getting rid of him. They would talk of nothing else but their inward experience in the things of God, and after a while Mr. Talkative dropped behind; that was not the sort of talk he wanted; and you will not long be troubled with the company of a gentleman who does not love your Master if you keep to the grand theme. He will soon be sick of you, and go where his trashy wares are saleable, which they do not appear to be in your market, for you have better goods on hand. These good people were communicative to those who could sympathise with them.

Note, again, that though they did not know their Master was there yet *they avowed their hopes concerning him*. I cannot commend all that they said, there was not much faith in it, but they did confess that they were followers of Jesus of Nazareth. "We trusted that it had been he which should deliver Israel. And, besides all this, to-day is the third day." And they went on to let out the secret that they belonged to his disciples. "Certain women of *our* company made us astonished." They were under a cloud and sad, but they were not so cowardly as to disown their connection with the Crucified. They were not so far gone in depression of spirit as to talk about the whole thing as though it were to be disavowed or concealed, lest anybody should say "You were the foolish dupes of an impostor." They still avowed their hope. And oh, beloved, when your comforts are at the lowest ebb still cling to your Master. If I never get a smile from his face as long as I live, I must speak well of him. If never again I see him yet is he the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.

like to see the strong retentiveness of many an almost despairing saint. I remember a minister who was talking to a poor bedridden woman who was under a grievous cloud, and she said, "Sir, I do not think I have any faith or any love for Christ whatever." He knew better; for he knew what her life had been, and so, walking up to the window, he wrote on a piece of paper, "I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ," and he brought it back with a pencil, and said, "Now, Sarah, sign that." When she had read it, she said, "Oh, sir, I would be torn to pieces before I would sign that." "Oh, but you said it just now." "Ah, sir, but I could not put my hand to it." "Then I suspect, Sarah, that you *do* love him." "Well, sir, whether I do or not, I will never give him up." I remember visiting a woman, years ago, whom I never could comfort till she died, and then she died triumphantly. I said to her, "What do you come to the chapel for? what is the good of it if there is nothing there for you?" "No," she said, "still I like to be there. If I perish, I will perish listening to the precious word." "Well, but why is it you remain a member of the church, as you say you are not a saved soul?" "Well," she said, "I know I am not worthy, but unless you turn me out I will never go out, for I like to be with God's people. I desire to be numbered with them, too, though I know I am not worthy, for I have no hope." I said, "Well, now, come, I will give you five pounds if you will give up your hope altogether;" and I drew out my purse. "Five pounds!" she said, and she looked at me with utter horror; "Five pounds!" She would not give Christ up for five thousand worlds. "But you have not got him, you said." "No, sir, I am afraid I have not got him, but *I will never give him up.*" Ah, there came out the real truth. So was it with these two disciples; they talked as if they could not give him up; though they were afraid that he had not risen from the dead, yet they remained his disciples, and spoke of "Certain women of our company," they were half-unconsciously clinging to the forlorn cause in its very worst estate. And, beloved, so will we. We will say with Job—"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

"When our eye of hope is dim,
We'll trust in Jesus, sink or swim;
Still at his footstool bow the knee,
And Israel's God our help shall be."

But, passing on,—these poor people, though very sad, and without their Master as they thought, were very *willing to bear rebukes*. Although the word used by our Lord should not be rendered "fools," yet it sounds somewhat hard even to call them inconsiderate and thoughtless; but we do not discover any resentment on their part because they were so severely chided. Souls that really love Jesus do not grow angry when faithfully rebuked. Beloved, do you approve the sermon which cuts you up root and branches? Are you thankful for the ministry which smites your faults? Do you say to the Lord, as you bare your bosom to the sword of his Word, "Search me and try me"? Ah, then, there is something more in you than in the man of the world, for his proud heart rebels when his conscience is too roughly assailed. I had the other day some such conversation as this

reported to me:—A man and his wife had come to the Tabernacle. The wife said she liked to go to church: her husband said he preferred to come here. What think you were the reasons of each choice? The woman said, "Spurgeon is too plain." "That is why I like him," said the husband. "He is too personal," said the wife; "I do not think people ought to be talked to in that way." "That is what we want," said the husband; "we want to have it brought home to us. What is the good of our going where there is nothing said that really belongs to us?" That is just so. We do not want a gospel that belongs to the people in the moon, but to ourselves. Some admire a preacher who can send a stone so high that it never hits anything, but we need a preacher who can sling a stone to a hair's breadth and not miss the target of the conscience. Whatever deficiency there may be about them, those are right at bottom who can bear to be somewhat roughly rebuked by their Master.

And then, they were *willing to learn*. Never better pupils, never a better Teacher, never a better school book, never a better explanation. They were disciples, with Christ to teach them, with the Bible for a school book, and himself to be the exposition; so they listened, while he went on to open up from Genesis, right through the Old Testament, the things concerning himself. Poor child of God, are you in doubt and trouble? Still be anxious to learn of Jesus. Pray the Lord to enlighten you. Ask him to teach you his statutes, and to open your eyes to behold wondrous things out of his law; for whatever God's children may not be, they are a teachable people. They shall all sit down at his feet, and all receive of his words.

Again, dear friends, notice that while the two were willing to learn, *they also wished to retain the teacher and his instruction, and to treat him kindly too*. They said, "Abide with us; the day is far spent." They had been benefited by him, and therefore they wished to show their gratitude to him. Have you learned so much that you are willing to learn more? Are you of a teachable heart, ready to receive with meekness the engrafted word? Now, I speak not of myself, for I have no cause to complain, but I have known true servants of Christ whom the people have driven forth from them because they were fickle and wanted a change, for change sake. They have not said, "Abide with us," neither have they given them to eat, but though they have been worthy servants of God they have been thrust out not knowing whither they should go, and their people not caring whither. I believe that God resents these things, and that the unkind treatment of his servants will bring judgment upon the church. If he sends ministers with his message, he expects them to be treated with respect and kindness. Just as Moses said to Hobab, so wise believers say to God-sent ministers, "Come thou with us and we will do thee good, and thou shalt be to us instead of eyes, for thou knowest where we should encamp in the wilderness; and as the Lord deals with us so we will deal with thee." These two disciples entertained their instructor, and would not let him go.

And, once more, though they did not know that their Master was with them, *they were well prepared to join in worship*. Some have thought that the breaking of bread that night was only Christ's ordi-

way of offering a blessing before meat; it does not seem so to because they had already eaten and were in the middle of the meal when he took the bread and blessed it. I think he did there then set before them those dear tokens of his passion, which he has feasted upon on the first day of the week, that we may show his faith until he shall come. Whichever it was, whether the devotion proper to their own table, or the devotion proper to the Lord's table, he joined in it. Now, it is a strong temptation of Satan with children of God to tempt them to stay away from the means of grace, because they are full of sorrow. Because they are in the dark the temptation is to keep away from the light; but oh, children of God, do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some.

Do not be tempted to stay from the place where God has met you, and made the place of his feet glorious. Join still with the Lord's people, and if your faith trembles, yet, nevertheless, come humbly to the table. Christ has not a table for those without doubts, else you might not come; he has not made it a table for those without sin, else you might not come; but he bids all his disciples come, you among them.

II. Lastly, let us try to set forth THE ACTIONS OF BELIEVERS WHEN THEY DISCOVER THEIR LORD. "Their eyes were opened, and they knew him." What then?

Well, first, *they discovered that there had been all along in their hearts longings of his presence.* "Did not our hearts burn within us while he was with us by the way?" This heavenly heartburn never comes only but through the presence of the Lord Jesus. They began to look at one another, and say, "Ought we not to have known that it was none other than our great Teacher by the very fact that when we saw him our hearts were burning for him?" Now let me turn the text round a little. There is a poor sinner here who says, "Oh, how I wish that I could find the Saviour, but I cannot find him." Why your heart is burning after him. Who is it that makes you long after him? These strong desires are kindled by his sovereign grace. He is near. "But I feel so much of the evil of sin! Oh, that it were rolled away. My heart cries, 'Give me Christ, or else I die.'" Do you think that humanity unrenewed by grace cries in that way? Surely the Master is near you. There is already, if not a summer in your heart, at least a springtide. The ice is breaking up, the buds are beginning to swell, the sun is coming, and you are beginning to feel his warmth. The Lord is not far from you, and one of these days when you come to look back upon it you will say, "I did not know it, but he was so near to me." I said, "Where shall I find him?" and all the while he was close upon me.

Now turn to the child of God. You perhaps have said, "I have communion with my Lord in that happy form I once enjoyed. But I can never be satisfied without him; I could sit me down and look my eyes out to think

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,—
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."

Where does this kind of heart-burning come from? From the devil? Then he has undertaken a new business. Does it come from yourself? Is that a sheep calling the shepherd? To me it looks like the shepherd seeking the sheep. But you say, "Oh, how I wish I could return to walking with God, abiding in Christ, and sitting under his shadow with great delight." Do you desire it vehemently, as they that wait for the morning? Who made you desire it, do you think? Is he so far away where those strong desires are present? I trow not. "Ah," say you, "I feel in my soul that I love him yet. I am afraid I have no fellowship with him, when I hear his name extolled, I say in my heart, 'That is the sweetest music under heaven.' When I hear my Master spoken of, I wish I had the tongue of men and angels that I might speak of him too. He cannot be too greatly extolled for me. I find tears in my eyes when I hear of his true love for sinners. Sometimes I am afraid I deceive myself, and am not a partaker in it, but still he is a precious Christ; and glory be to his name." Do you think you would have your heart burning like that if he had quite gone? I think not. You feel your heart burning for the conversion of others. You say, "Oh that we had a revival of religion everywhere, that the kingdom would come unto Christ, and the crown were set upon his head over ten thousand times ten thousand human hearts!" Your heart breaks for the longing that Christ may be glorified among men, and yet you say, "I am afraid he is not with me." One of these days you will say, "Did not my heart burn within me? He must have been near." You are blindfolded, and cannot see the fire, yet, if on a cold day you get very hot, I should think there must be a fire near you. If you cannot see Jesus to your soul's comfort, yet still, if there be such glowings and burnings as these, he is very near you. Sometimes on the Sabbath do you not know what it is to say, "Oh, Lord and Master, the days are weary in which I do not see thee, when shall I behold thee face to face?" You have heard of the glory of Christ in heaven, and you have longed to peep through the keyhole, if that were all, that you might see the King in his beauty; and you have cried, "Why is his chariot so long in coming?" You have wished you could—

"Sit and sing yourself away
To everlasting bliss."

Well, you may be sure the lodestone is not far off when the needle is so much moved. When your eyes are opened you will say, "Why was I with him! He was with me! Did not my heart burn within me while he spake with me by the way? My doubts and fears, my trembling heart forbade my understanding how near the precious Christ was to me."

The next thing they did was to *compare notes*. The one said to the other, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" It is always a good thing for believers to communicate their returning enjoyment. So how we are rather chary as to speaking of our joys. Ought we to do so? One does not mind speaking of his faults to his brother, there does not seem to be any assumption in that; but if the Lo

very gracious I have known believers feel as if they could not speak of it lest they should seem to exalt themselves. We must studiously avoid everything like self-exaltation, but we must not rob our Master of a particle of his glory. If we have seen the Lord let us tell our brethren so, and say one to another, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" If you had a very dull and dry discourse you would get together and say, "Oh dear, dear! Our Sundays are dreadfully wasted now. We do not profit. The good man is so dull and dead," and so on. You would be sure to say that, would you not? Well, when the Lord refreshes you, say one to another, "It was good to be there this morning. We had a feast of fat things. The Lord was with us." Do not leave the table of spiritual bread till, like a good child, you have thanked your Father.

Once again. These disciples, when they saw the Master, *hastened to tell others about it*. It was the dead of the night, I suppose, by the time they knew their Lord. Our Lord Jesus had none of the prejudices of the High Church fraternity against breaking bread in the evening. That has always seemed to me to be the oddest of their freaks, that they will persist in contending that the Lord's Supper ought to take place early in the morning. They ought not to call it a "supper," they should style it a breakfast. I never could understand a certain class of Christians, great sticklers, too, for Scripture, who always will have the Lord's Supper in the morning of the day, without any precedent, that I know of, for turning an evening meal into a morning one. I grant there is no importance whatever in the time, the only importance that I speak of is putting an importance on a wrong time, which those do who say it ought to be in the early part of the day. We say that whenever believers meet together they may break bread in remembrance of their Lord; if, however, there is one time more like the first occasion, it certainly is the evening of the day. Though it was late, the two disciples set off on a seven-and-a-half mile journey, in the dead of night, to tell others that they had seen the Lord. If ever you find Christ to the joy of your heart, go and tell his people about it. Ay, and tell sinners too, and put yourself to inconvenience to do it. Now-a-days we are willing to testify if we can do it very comfortably; but I love to hear of those good brethren who will walk many miles on the Sabbath day to preach the gospel, who are willing to sacrifice ease and comfort so that they may do good to others, just as these did. Oh, for more enthusiasm in telling of the Saviour's love and hearing of it! We want nice cushions and very comfortable pews, don't we now-a-days? When we were first converted we would stand anywhere in the crowd, if we could but hear the Saviour's name. I remember when I would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear about my Master, or to preach about him either. May our earnest love to him never grow cold, and our enthusiasm never depart. May a midnight's walk be nothing to us if we may but declare even to unbelieving brethren what we have seen of our blessed Lord. It is a good message, and it is a good errand to go upon, when we go to tell of Jesus, and it will bring good to our own souls.

I notice that while they told of their Lord's appearing, *they made*

mention of the ordinance which had been blest to them, for they especially said that he had been known to them in the breaking of bread. If I to see them mention that, for, though ordinances are nothing themselves, and are not to be depended upon, they are blest to them. There is a tendency among us, because others make too much of ordinances, to make too little of them. Do not treat baptism, or the Lord's Supper, or the reading of the word, or the hearing of it, in a slight manner. If these are blest to you, bless God for them; and if God speaks to you through them, do not forget to say that they have been valuable channels of communication.

And now, dear child of God, I pray for you and for myself that we may always have our Master with us, and may know it: but, if we lose his recognised presence, may we act as these two disciples did or better. May the Lord lead us on from strength to strength, and glorify himself in us. If there be any poor sinner here who was once a follower of Jesus Christ, let him remember that his desire after Christ is an indication of the nearness of the Saviour to him. Christ is always within eye-shot. He cries, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." He is close at hand to every seeking soul. "If thou seek him he will be found of thee." "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near." Trust him, and he is yours.

May Jesus abide with you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xxiv. 1—

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—766, 776, 785.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON

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THINKING AND TURNING.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 5TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies."—Psalm cix. 59.

ALMOST every phase of spiritual life is depicted in the Psalms, but we shall not always find in them the interpretation of those deep exercises of soul with which the believer grows familiar. We must look to the New Testament for full discourses upon the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, upon the conflicting forces of grace, and depraved nature, and for the other causes which produce the mysterious experience of the Christian. In the Old Testament we get the facts; in the New Testament we find the explanation of the facts. The statement of David, which is now before us, doubtless sets forth the experience of many here present in this assembly; "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies." The Spirit's operation in the heart is wont to produce thoughtfulness, and through thoughtfulness to effect conversion in the sinner. In the case of the believer, a restoration to the joy of salvation comes of like salutary reflections upon the negligence of one's life. Repentance originates in thinking upon our ways; it proceeds to compare them with God's precepts, and faith prompts us to revert to the way of God's testimonies. I understand our text to be a brief but complete account of the conversion of the sinner, and of the restoration of the backslidden child of God. I hope that many of us, looking back to the time of our conversion, can use the words as our own, and oh, how many times since, if we have in any measure or degree departed from our right state with regard to our heavenly Father, have we had occasion to resort to the means suggested here: "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." The case stands thus. We are going on in the pro-

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fession of a Christian life, with little or no soul trouble; temporal things are easy with us; by degrees we become unwatchful, and the world steals into our hearts, till the love of it creeps over us. We still pursue the even tenor of our way, unconscious of the danger that threaten us, or the condition to which we have gradually descended. By-and-by discoveries startle us—we find ourselves unfit for the fellowship we once enjoyed. We lose our power in prayer. The duty which once was pleasant becomes irksome. All the symptoms point to serious derangement. This pulls us right up. We look about us. We ask in sad perplexity—"Where am I? How did I get here? Am I a child of God, how then can I have lost my former strength and happiness?" Thus we begin to deliberate, we survey our course during the last few months, and we soon detect many sorrowful omissions of duty and perhaps even commissions of sin, till the grace of God which is in us prompts us to seek the shortest way back to our right position. We have wandered into Byepath Meadow, and at the sight of Giant Despair's castle we endeavour to retrace our steps. The mariner has been gaily sailing on a smooth sea, and he has given no heed to his bearings; on a sudden he sees a rock ahead, from this he ought to have been far away; at that sight he shortens sail, looks about him, and in consequence of what he sees changes his course, sets a better watch, and is restless until once more he reaches the old familiar channel. Fellow-voyager on the sea of life, may not this be your case or mine? It is very likely that at this moment some of us, if enabled by God's Spirit to think upon our ways, may be led to pause and ponder our bearings. Thus by God's infinite mercy our course in life may be changed, our character may be altered for the better, so we may once more return to our rest. I pray that if we have never known the Saviour at all we may become his disciples to-day. Perhaps a single solemn thought lodged in your breast shall become the means of your conversion. God grant it may be so. This very day may some have to say, "At that time I thought upon my ways, and I turned my feet unto God's testimonies."

Two things will engage our attention this morning—a consideration and a consequence. The first is *right thinking*, and the next is *right turning*. "I thought," and "I turned." The two things go together.

I. Our first point is **RIGHT THINKING**—"I thought on my ways." That *this thought upon his ways caused him dissatisfaction is evident*; or otherwise he would not have turned. If in reviewing of my ways I find that they are all as God would have them, let me "go on"; it may be well in such a case to quicken one's pace; certainly it would be unwise to turn; so that it is clear that the right thinking of the text is a thinking which suggests dissatisfaction. Let your own reflections flow, I pray you, just now in this channel.

Think of the days of your youth, of the time before you were born unto God. Or, if you are not converted, consider your whole life. You are God's creature, and yet you have rendered to him no obedience! You would not keep a horse or a dog that did not do you some service, or follow at your whistle. But God has made you and kept you alive, yet hitherto he has not been in all, or, peradventure, in any of your thoughts. You have been an unprofitable servant, you are

like a fruitless tree, planted on good soil. Is this as it should be? Do you feel any comfort in such a retrospect? I am sure, if you ponder it fairly, and judge righteous judgment, you will be very disappointed. Must you not say to yourself, "This will not do"?

If you are converted, in looking back upon your unconverted days you will say, "Of all this I am now ashamed; what fruit had I of those pursuits in which I served myself, sought my own pleasures, revelled in my lusts, and made my belly my god, living for the world instead of loving my Creator and Benefactor?" Consider your ways, O you who have never yet sought forgiveness. Would God that you might come to yourselves, and so track the course of your sins, that the tear of penitence might be distilled from your heart, and begin to bedew your eye. Were it so, I know that ere long you would say, "I will arise and go to my Father, and I will say unto him, Father, I have sinned." An unconverted state is an unhappy state; an unforgiven sinner is in constant peril. Even if the unsaved one should obtain the greatest success in business, the largest accumulation of wealth, the highest honours of fame, and the loftiest degree of rank, he would remain a pitiable object, because unblest of God. Such a soul in wretched unquietness walks through dry places, seeking rest and finding none. Till it comes home to its God, peace and prosperity it cannot know. May God in his infinite mercy lead unconverted men to review their ways and forsake them.

But, my brethren, if we think upon our ways since our new birth, we have little cause to be content with them. Think of the best things you have ever done; does the flush of self-congratulation colour your cheek? So far as I am concerned, far from me be every thought of glorying in anything which I have done for my Lord. Upon no sermon I have ever preached, though God knows I have preached my very soul out, am I able to look back without a measure of shame and confusion of face. I know I have preached the gospel, but the manner of my preaching does not satisfy me. I would fain wash every discourse in the tears of repentance, for in each one there are faults and failures that betray the weakness of a man, the infirmity of a creature, the unprofitableness of a servant. No deed of charity or act of devotion that I ever performed can I look back upon with unmixed feelings. I wish that my best had been a thousand times better, and had not been so sadly spoiled, as it often has been, by unbelief at the outset, or pride at the end, or by flagging zeal in the middle passage. This confession is no insincere regret, or a spurious attempt to appear humble—I mean what I say—and I believe that in the like confession the most devout of men would the most heartily concur. The sins of our holy things—how grievous they are! It is only because our consciences are so blind that we do not shudder at the sight of them. Do you ever think you have done well, in that very thinking you have done ill. When I hear any of my brethren talk of being perfect, I wonder what they mean. Do they use the English language? Do they know themselves or their God? In perfect ignorance they surely must be held captive. As to their own nature and its workings, they can have no knowledge, or else such boastful expressions could not come from their lips. Brethren, the saints are sinners still, our best tears need to be wept over,

the strongest faith is mixed with unbelief; our most flaming love is cold and chill compared with what Jesus deserves, and our intensest zeal still lacks the full fervour which the bleeding wounds and pierced heart of the Crucified might claim at our hands. Our best things need a sin offering, or they would condemn us. As for our worst things,—come, think of them. Remember your failures, your transgressions, and your provocations. Blush as you recall the times when the curb has been taken from your temper and anger has flashed forth in flames of fire though you had hoped that all your passions had been subdued: remember those times of levity, when, free from all restraints, your tongue has not spoken to edification or even within the bounds of propriety. Can we bear to think of hours when we have been tempted by avarice to withhold that which we ought to have given, or when we have given out of the pride which we fondly thought had died out of our blood-washed hearts? Have you not felt sluggish in the Lord's work? Have you not, like Jonah, in your peevishness and irritability been ready to flee from his face and forsake his calling? Have there not been seasons when you have gone into your chamber and shut the door and wept sore because of your folly, and half wished never to rise from your knees again? Have you not said, "Ah me, that ever I should be such a brute beast as this"? Truly had you not been proud and self-conceited you would not have been surprised to find yourself so like a beast, as indeed you are. Do you recoil at my language, and account it far too harsh? I am using Scriptural language, David's own words are—"So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee; nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou holdest me by my right hand." What a strange medley are we of the diabolical and the divine, the sinful and the heavenly, so sadly wedded to the earth, and yet so gloriously born from heaven. If you look at your worst side I am sure, beloved, you will abhor yourself and lie in the very dust before the Lord. You will not doubt the cleansing power of Jesus' blood, but you will be filled with holy wonder that it should have availed to cleanse such sins as yours.

Come, my brother, bow thyself in self-abasement, follow up this examination and take stock of thy ways since thou hast known the Lord. How behavedst thou thyself in thy poverty? Did thy heart repine? wast thou envious of the foolish? Seemed it to thee that God's providence was harsh while thy lot was hard? And how didst thou act in thy wealth? Hadst thou a deep solicitude to render unto the Lord according to all that he had done for thee? Or didst thou count thy cash and grudge thy tithes? Was thy hand closed to thy kinsman in his adversity, because thou wouldst rival thy neighbour in his extravagance? How went it with thee in thy sickness? Wast thou patient on the bed of languishing? Didst thou kiss the hand that smote thee, and minister to those that waited on thee? How went it with thee in thy health? Didst thou consecrate thy strength wholly unto thy Lord? How was it with thee in thine honour? Couldst thou lay thy crown at his feet? How was it with thee in thy shame? Didst thou glory in being despised for Christ's sake? How has it been with thee in private, and how in public? How hast thou comported thyself on thy knees, and with the sacred book open before thee? What

progress hast thou made in the knowledge of God's will? How hast thou behaved thyself in thy house, and how do thy children speak of thee? What opinion has thy servant formed of thy conduct? How hast thou acted towards sinners? Didst thou ever wet thy pillow with tears for them? Thou seest them going down to hell by millions; did thy heart never break while thou wast interceding for them? Come, the retrospection is painful, and I have marked out lines enough if you choose to follow them. Surely there is no room for boasting, but much need of turning. The very best man among us ought to be far better; the best man is but a man at his best. Lord, what is man! What is man that thou art mindful of him?

It will be wise to think of our ways in the light of God's law, that mirror of perfect holiness. How far short do we come of the divine requirements? Think of them also in the light of God's favour: what innumerable good things we have received from the Lord's hands! Have our returns been at all commensurate? Think of your life in the light of the cross. You have sinned in the presence of your crucified Lord. Have you been dead indeed unto sin? Think of your life in view of your risen Saviour. Have you been alive to righteousness? Are you not ashamed? Think of your life in the light of the day of judgment, and the coming of the Lord from heaven. How will your actions appear in the light of the tremendous day? How will they weigh in the infallible balances of unerring justice? Truly, as we think of our ways we sit humbled before the Lord, and boasting is excluded.

This right thinking upon our ways will suggest a practical change. When we have erred in the past, it is certain that we have been sufferers thereby. We have been greatly injured by sin, and if we are now in a sinful condition, will not a worse thing happen to us? If I am an unconverted man, what will become of me ere long? God is already angry with me, for he is angry with the wicked every day. What will that anger lead to? What must be the end of a life that is unprofitable to God? What must be the eternal future of one who has resisted the gospel, disobeyed God, and neglected him in all ways? Am I a child of God, the tendency of sin must be fearfully injurious to me. It must pierce me through with many sorrows; and if I am now out of order with God in some degree, how much further may this disorder go? What if I should make shipwreck of my profession? What if I should grievously transgress, and have to go the rest of my journey with broken bones? What if it should be declared in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die? My soul, sin even now hath not profited thee while it is in the bud; what will it be when it ripens, and its scattered seeds fly over the whole of my being, and turn that which should be a fruitful field into a tangled mass of weeds? Surely it is time for a change. There may be some few saints among you who do not need much changing, who have gone on so well that you may pray to continue as you are; but I am not one of such myself. I am afraid that there are few who are. I pine for something better, I pant to rise higher, to climb nearer my God, to love him more, to serve him better, and to be more fully consecrated to him.

A retrospect of our ways suggests the need of a practical alteration, not merely of planning or resolving, but of practically amending our course. "I thought upon my ways," says David, "and I turned myself unto thy testimonies," that is to say, he really did leave the old trail, and follow the better track. He rose from coldness into fervour, from neglect of prayer into intense pleadings; he left the faulty for the more excellent way.

Dear brethren, *the retrospect we take of our life should suggest that any turn we make should be Godward*—"I turned my steps unto thy testimonies." It is no use turning if you do not turn to something better. There are certain people about who are always shifting; they hear some new dogma, and that is *the* thing, straightway they are all agog for that. To-morrow they will meet with some other new theory, and straightway they will be mad in pursuit of it. They remind me of Luther's expression, when he says, "There are certain people who, the moment they see a heresy, stare at it like a cow at a new gate"; they look and look and look again at the new thing, as if it must be wonderful because it is new. The cow at length sees enough of the new gate, and goes back to her grass, but these people still stand staring, and another new frivolity bewitches them as soon as the former nine days' wonder has grown stale. If I turn, God grant I may turn from good to better, or else it is ill to turn at all. The best turn in the world is when a man turns to God. Such an one turns with purpose of heart. "Now," saith he, "I will follow the word to the very letter, I will yield to the Spirit; his every monition shall be law to me: I will live with Jesus, and my spirit, soul, and body shall be dedicated to him." Such a holy resolve is greatly needed now-a-days. The divisions of churches would be healed, the errors of the times would die out, the lukewarmness of this present age would pass away, if once sinners were turned to God's testimonies, and saints were more fully turned to them also.

Thus right thinking about our ways suggests that we ought to be dissatisfied, suggests a turning, suggests a turning to God, but *it also suggests that such a turning is possible*. Many a man in thinking upon his ways contents himself—"Well, they are bad, and they always will be bad," and when a sinner once accepts that notion he will abide in his sin, and go from worse to worse. I know of nothing which makes a man so grossly vicious as to be persuaded that virtue is impossible to him. "If I cannot repent, then I may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, and damned for much as little." So the sinner feels, and he advances in sin to its utmost degree. But, O beloved, the right way of thinking of your ways is to remember that you still may turn unto God's testimonies. No man's case is hopeless. Every man's condition would be hopeless apart from God and the precious blood, and the power of the Holy Ghost; but in connection with these no man's career, however habitually bad, is desperate; he may be changed, his feet may be turned to God's testimonies.

You also, O Christian, may have fallen to-day into a very dull state, you hardly know whether you have true godliness or not, religion is almost a weariness to you. Ah, dear soul, let not despair imprison you; you can yet turn your feet to God's testimonies; by the power of

the eternal Spirit you can be lifted out of your backsliding condition. As a child of God, you must not sit down and say, "I am delivered unto these corruptions, and given over to the power of Satan." The Son has made you free, and free you are. Shake thyself from the dust, arise and sit down, O Jerusalem. Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. Thou hast been redeemed, and thou art no more a slave; thy chains are broken, Christ with his mighty hammer has beaten them to pieces upon the anvil of his cross. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light." While the Lord liveth, and the eternal Spirit goeth forth to save, there yet is hope of restoration.

This is very simple talk. I mean it to be simple. Yet I want it to be practical. Let me pause here and entreat every sinner to indulge the preacher with this favour—just now for a few minutes look upon your past life. Perhaps you have been so moral in your character and so amiable in your disposition, that you can reflect on years past without blushing. But there is one thing that ought to fill you with shame. You have entirely failed to love, or trust, or serve God. Wherefore should it be so? Is it right? Can you in any way make it consistent with honour that you should live as you do, wronging none but your God, saving all your injustice for him? You are kind, ay, you are kind even to a dog, but not to your God! Tender towards the sick and the poor, to every one but our dear Lord, who on the bloody tree revealed his love to men! Wherefore this exception to the usual current of your life? Wherefore is the good God singled out as the one person to be treated with unkindness and injustice?

But, possibly, your life has not been pure; gross deeds of sin have stained it. Well, I shall not recall these things; *your memory will serve for that, and your own conscience will upbraid you.* What I do suggest is that you should give enough thought to your ways at least to breathe some such prayer as this:—Lord, turn me and I shall be turned; may this be the hour in which I shall put away old things, and enter upon a new life through Jesus Christ.

If any of you who are children of God have become gross backsliders, I would urge you to the like self-examination and self-accusation. Think upon your ways with a stern censorship, a bitter penitence, a strong resolve. Take time and calmly deliberate. Sum up the evidence impartially in your own case. "For if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

Christian people, you who are walking, in a measure, in fellowship with God, I press upon you, nevertheless, the same considerateness, not that there may be a reason for entire dissatisfaction, yet it is always wise to observe your conduct with scrupulous fidelity. Tradesmen generally give up attention to their books when things are out of sorts with them; they do not like their books, for their books do not like them. The man who does not like self-examination may be pretty certain that things need examining. Let us look diligently to our ways, and may good come of it to the profit of our souls.

II. Secondly, our text treats of **RIGHT TURNING**, which grows out of right thinking. The turning of the text is thus described: "I turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Here observe how *complete* this turn was. A man may turn his head, and turn but little; he may turn his hand—there is not much movement of the whole body in that; but when he turns his feet, he turns himself completely. The turn we sinners all need is a whole turn. The nature must be changed. The things we love must no longer be the supreme objects of our affection; the pursuits of the world which were our idols must no longer be such. The things we have despised we must now esteem. Eternity which seemed distant must be brought near; earthly things which ruled us must be put beneath our feet. There must be an entire revolution in our nature to make us right. The child of God when he gets wrong must come right away from everything which has misled him, and follow the Lord fully, with purpose of heart.

The turning of the text is also a *practical* one. Whenever the foot or the hand is mentioned in Scripture, something practical is meant. "I turned my feet": I did not merely say, "I turned my eyes," but I showed the reality of the change of heart by change of life. It will not suffice for a sinner to say, "Oh, I am converted; I love Jesus Christ," and then go to his business and cheat as he did before, or resort to his old habits and drink as freely as he did before, or keep company with his former associates and use profane language, as was his previous wont, or act as a worldling acts in following the lusts of the flesh and pursuing the vanities of the age. A change of life alone can prove a change of heart.

When the child of God gets out of order with the Lord, his change must be a practical change too. He must not waste himself in regrets, but arouse himself to action. Let him immediately "arise and go to his Father." The Spirit of God must stir him to action. He must sleep no longer. He must procrastinate no more. There is vital energy and urgent haste in all positive reformation.

It must be, moreover, a *scriptural* turn too. "I turned my feet unto thy testimonies." There is a spurious conversion which is not true conversion to God. A man may have another heart and yet he may not have a new heart. We read of King Saul that he had another heart, but he remained unsaved. A man may change his idols; he may change his sins, but may not be changed in heart. Drunkards have become sober, and renounced their intoxicating cups, which is so far so good, but they have presently become intoxicated with a conceit of their own virtue, and extolled themselves as models of purity. Ah then! it is a poor gain to change drunkenness for self-righteousness. Both sins are deadly. A man may as easily go to hell by trusting in himself as by resigning himself to a besetting vice. Hell is

many gates, though heaven has but one. We must experience the change, which is according to the word of God, and so the text saith, "I turned my feet unto thy testimonies," that is, to believe what God has revealed, to accept what God presents, to do what God commands, and to be what God would have us to be. May God give us to experience within and to manifest without such a radical turn as that.

The truth I want to bring out most prominently is this—the turning was *immediate*. "I thought on my ways,"—well, what then? "I turned my feet," directly, immediately. And can this be so? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots? Can the sinner immediately be made a saint? Can the saint who has backslidden be at once restored? Can I, who come into the house of God dull and dead, suddenly brighten up, and become full of light and life and joy? Well, the text puts it so. "I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Indeed it is so. But mark you, if it be so *it must be a divine work*. David does not tell us this in so many words, but the testimonies to which David refers are clear and conclusive on the point. To take a man and put him through a long process, as some do, of law-work and repentance, and so set before him gradual enlightenment and assurance of faith as a distant result—well, I do not see so much to marvel at as a divine operation in that sort of renovation; but to take a man right away from his former self, and save him there and then is certainly the work of God. Zacchæus is up in the tree, Jesus bids him "Come down"; down he comes, his heart is changed directly: salvation has come to him, and he forthwith makes and pays the vows that prove his sincerity—that is surely divine. Yonder is a person who through a long course of experiences and performances has gradually attained to the belief that he is a Christian; I hope he is so, but I am not his judge. But here is a man, a jailer, who has been putting his prisoners' feet fast in the stocks, he is cruel, hard, wicked, an old soldier, used to war, with no tenderness in him; in the middle of the night there comes an earthquake, and he holds his sword to his breast to kill himself, because he fears the prisoners have escaped; a voice cries to him, "Do thyself no harm," and he inquires, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Within half an hour that man becomes a Christian, a Baptist, and a saved man. The Lord did that, I am sure. But does he work in that manner now? Are not these the exceptions? No, they are the rule. How know I that? There was a man once who hated the church of Christ so bitterly that he meant to cut it up root and branch, and riding on his horse to Damascus with warrants to put to death all the saints in Damascus, on a sudden he saw a bright light, he was smitten down, and in a few minutes he was lying down prostrate at Jesus' feet, a

penitent. That is God's work, it must be, and this is how he works still. But does he work ordinarily as he did in the apostle? Paul's words. "In me first did God show forth all longsuffering pattern." If a thing is a pattern, the intention is to produce articles like it; the original is:—"For a *typos*, or a type." I conversion was a typical or representative conversion. There be conversions which are not of that type, but many will be acting to that pattern; indeed, to speak the full truth, every conversion must in a sense be sudden. The actual point of the conversion is instantaneous. I am walking through a wood, and I am going well, I pause and look about, but whenever I actually turn there is a critical moment when I turn, is there not? It may be that I have some time to consider and look about me; but when I do actually go back there is a particular moment when I turn and take the step. I desire that this present moment may be the instant of conversion to each one of you who are dead in sin. You have been thinking of your ways, now may you turn your feet to his testimony. This must be the work of grace. The omnipotent power of God will turn you to himself.

This leads me to observe that it must be by faith, because a man cannot be altogether changed in a moment by works. If works had the changing power—which they have not, since the fruit cannot change the root, and no number of bushels of figs could turn a nettle in a fig-tree—the man must have time to do the works, whereas time is not an element here. It is "I thought," and "I turned," and, therefore, it must be by faith. Many a sinner has been for years desiring a change which he would find in one moment if he did but believe in Jesus. He has been praying, and reading, and repenting, and has not known what beside, trying to find salvation, whereas the Saviour has found it for him. Let him but look to Jesus, and simply trust in him, he will be saved in a moment, he will be a renewed man, he will be able to say, in the language of the text, "I thought on my ways and turned unto thy testimonies." I would drive you to this point, but my time fails me. May God the Eternal Spirit bring many to God's testimonies at this very moment.

I have these closing words to the child of God: are you this morning in a sad, sorrowful, unholy condition? Do you desire to get out of it? Then, my brother, arise, for Jesus calls you. "But I cannot," say you. *You* cannot, I grant you that, for without Jesus you cannot do anything; but I am not talking about what you can do. I want to remind you that there is no reason why you should not ascend into a noble condition at once. Are you not one with Jesus still? Do not let the state into which you have fallen, you are still a member of his body. Who can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ.

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morning to the prayer-meeting by the river, she did not think to find Jesus, but the Lord who opened her heart sent Paul to speak to her, and Lydia went home a convert, and why should not you? And you, young man of business, a money-taker like Matthew, who sat at the receipt of customs, remember Jesus said "Follow me," and Matthew did not stop a moment, but followed Jesus at his call. May the like happen to you to-day! You were not a disciple of Christ yesterday, but when you go to business to-morrow they will soon find out that you are a new man, and this will be the happy day to you, the day of your turning to God. If it be so, they will hear about it in heaven, and there will be joy in the presence of the angels of God over one who thought upon his ways, and turned his feet unto God's testimonies. The Lord bless you, every one of you, for his name's sake. Amen

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxix. 49—72.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 12TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The God of my mercy shall prevent me."—Psalm lix. 10.

A LIFE without trouble would be very uninteresting. Our opportunities for greatness would be narrowed down if trials were gone. I watched a glorious sunset, marvelling at the beauty wherewith the evening skies were all ablaze, and adoring him who gave them their matchless colouring. On the next evening I resorted to the same spot, hoping to be again enraptured with the gorgeous pomp of ending day, but there were no clouds, and, therefore, no glories. True, the canopy of sapphire was there, but no magnificent array of clouds to form golden masses with edges of burning crimson, or islands of loveliest hue set in a sea of emerald; there were no great conflagrations of splendour or flaming peaks of mountains of fire. The sun was as bright as before, but for lack of dark clouds on which to pour out his lustre his magnificence was unrevealed. A man who should live and die without trials would be like a setting sun without clouds; he would have scant opportunity for the display of those virtues with which the grace of God had endowed him. In the case of David we have much cause for thankfulness that he did not lead a life of unbroken tranquillity. It is well for us that his was not a flowery path of continuous prosperity. Over him the waves and billows dashed full often; both within and without he was assailed daily, so that he became the epitome of all the temptations and the aspirations, the graces and the weaknesses, the joys, and the sorrows of our humanity, and hence his life became so wondrously instructive. David owed much to the Philistines, to the tracks of the wild goats, to the cave of Adullam, and to persecuting Saul; his hunted life, and a thousand trying circumstances, trained him for a grand life, and made him for us a mirror in which we see ourselves reflected in all our varying moods and passions. None of us can know what we are till we are tried, nor will the good within us increase to any degree of betterness unless it be exercised. The arm unused loses

No. 1,182.

muscular force, put it to stern labour and it gathers strength; we are made by war and mariners by storms; the scholar may be hard to be severely examined, but he becomes the wiser by the test. Our trials and troubles, while they test and develop us, are by divine grace strengthen and improve us, and ever have we cause to bless God for them when grace sanctifies them to our good. Had not David been a man of many afflictions he would have penned such a verse as our text, a confident utterance of unflinching faith, full of meaning, rich with consolation, the very expression of assured hope in God.

There are three things in the text: the first is David's *looking to God*, for God is the theme of the verse; secondly, David's *appropriation of divine mercy*—"the God of my mercy;" and then, thirdly, David's *confidence in merciful help from God*—"The God of my mercy prevent me."

I. First, then, let us think for awhile of David's LOOKING TO GOD. "The God of my mercy," saith he. Note that this psalm composed by him upon the occasion of his being shut up in the cave of Michal, Saul's daughter, and surrounded by his adversaries. messengers of the bloodthirsty king watched the house all night to kill him, and when they had not effected their purpose, Saul commanded that he should be brought, on his bed, into his prison that he might slay him. It was not easy for a man, when his enemies were watching the house, to escape out of their hands. David, however, does not appear to have been at all disturbed, but with confidence in God he expected that a way of escape would be made for him. He could not hope that Saul would relent, nor could he expect his friends to come to the rescue, neither did he rely upon his own valour or cunning for the means of escape, but calmly prayed, deliver me from mine enemies, O my God; defend me from those that rise up against me." He rested quietly, feeling sure that God would break his enemies in derision, and could as readily break the line of watch as a man can drive off a pack of prowling dogs, to whom indeed he compares his foes. Now, brethren, this looking above, this having confidence upon the Lord, is a practice which should be habitual with all believers and needs to be learned by us all.

David looked to God on this occasion because he had before habitually waited upon him. His faith had realised the existence of God, and his soul had felt the power of that realised truth. This is a thing unknown to the unconverted, and unfelt to any high degree by large numbers of those who profess to know the Lord. That the existence of God is a doctrine which we all receive, but that God *really* exists grasped by us as it should be. Other existences are more real to us, whereas God's being should be the most real of all. We look upon God's existence as a mystery, a light and airy thing, proper to be believed in, but not a matter of every-day fact which can influence our lives to any great extent. This unreal view of God arises from a secret deep-seated unbelief. We dare not say that God is a fiction, but we act as if he were so. The faith which David had, and which I trust we have attained to, makes God a fact to the mind and heart, intensely and relatively real. An eye anointed with faith looks upon me

women as if they were shadows, for they are soon to dissolve and cease to be; but it views the Lord as the only real substantial existence, and all that concerns him as being alone sure and vitally important. God is unseen, but none the less present and energetic in our lives; he is unheard by the ear but none the less perceived by the heart; he is certainly at work accomplishing his purposes, although our coarse and earth-bound senses cannot discover him. Faith has a far greater perceptive power than the senses, it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." While carnal men say "seeing is believing," we assure them that to us "believing is seeing." We turn their saying upside down, our faith is eye and ear, and taste and touch to us, it is so mighty in us that we do not only know that there is a God, but we regard him as the great motive force of the universe, and daily calculate upon his mighty aid. Hence it is the Christian's habit to fall back upon God in all time of faintness, to cry to God in all time of danger: he does not pray because he thinks it a pious though useless exercise, but because he believes it to be an effectual transaction, the potent pleading of a child with its parent, rewarded with loving grants of blessing. The believer does not look up to heaven because it is a natural instinct to hope for better days, and to cheer one's self with a pious fiction about providence, but he looks up to heaven because God is actually there, truly observant, tenderly sympathetic, and ready with a mighty arm to come to the rescue of his people. So, then, because it is our wont to wait upon the Lord, we go to him in troublous days as a matter of course. We do not make him an occasional resort to be used only when we cannot help it, but we dwell in him, and morning by morning pour out our hearts before him; and so when adversity comes, we fly to God as naturally as the dove to its dovecote, or the coney to the rock, or the weary child to its mother's bosom. The nautilus, when disturbed, folds up its sails and sinks into the depths, and even so in every hour of storm we descend into the deeps of divine love. Blessed is that man whose spirit looks to God alone at all times. Let us each one ask his own heart—is this my case? And if we can answer aright, let us sing with Madame Guyon—

" Ah, then! to his embrace repair;
My soul, thou art no stranger there;
There love divine shall be thy guard,
And peace and safety thy reward."

On this special occasion *David was driven more closely to his God by the peculiar trouble with which he was environed.* To no other helper could he look, he was shut up to his God. Michal, Saul's daughter, proved faithful to him, but he could not have been sure that she would be so to incur her father's displeasure for his sake. Outside the house there might be friendly hearts, but they were far away, and the watchful yrmidons of the tyrant shut up every avenue: but lo, there was a road highway upwards to the throne of the Most High, and the believing prayers of David traversed the shining road and brought him assurances of deliverance. To whom could he look but unto God? Every other door was closed, save that door which is opened in heaven. He, then, how the bow of trouble shot him like an arrow towards

God! It is a blessed thing when the waves of affliction wash us upon the rock of confidence in God alone, when darkness below gives us an eye to the light above. The psalmist says in the verse preceding the text, "Because of his strength"—that is, the strength of the foe—"will I wait upon thee, for God is my defence." Because the enemy is too strong for me, therefore will I turn to my God, and invoke his omnipotence as my defence. Are any of you, this morning, in trouble so deep that you know you must sink in it, so far as material help is concerned? That is a glorious position to be in if your faith proves equal to the occasion, and leads you to cast yourself upon God and swim to shore. It is nothing for a man to walk down here upon the ground, but to walk aloft upon yonder slender thread, which the eye can scarcely see, is a feat of skill at which men gaze with admiration; and to walk on what the eye cannot see at all, or the foot feel, needs a yet higher art: such is the walk of faith. To lean upon God's invisible arm, which the carnal mind knoweth not of, and accounts as little worth, is grand work. If you can walk where there is no visible pathway, you belong to the race of the immortals, a God-given faith proves your lineage to be divine. Perhaps you have a task set before you which is much too heavy for you; well, brother, you have the honour of being placed where you can, to the full, display your trust in God. What you can do you must do, but what you cannot do and yet must do, you may confidently expect the Lord to enable you to perform. He will elevate your weakness into a platform for his power. To come to the end of yourself is to get to the beginning of your God. Blessed is that extremity which is God's opportunity. Such was David's case.

As soon as David had looked alone to his God his trials grew small. In his own esteem they grew to be nothing, for he says, "Thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them, thou shalt have all the heathen in derision;" and methinks something of the laughter of God penetrated David's spirit; and in that house wherein he was enclosed as a prisoner he smiled in his heart at the disappointment which awaited his foes. You may look at your troubles till your spirits sink within you; you may watch the adversaries of God till your soul within you is heavy even to despair; but if you then lift up your eye to him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will, across whose brow serene no cloud can ever pass, who speaks and it is done, who commands and it stands fast, who bears up the unpillared arch of heaven, and unaided wheels the ponderous orbs along their trackless courses; then difficulties vanish, impossibilities end, and perils and dangers cease to be. To get away from man and nestle beneath the wing of God is to exchange doubt for certainty, and fear for confidence. Faith laughs at that which fear weeps over; it leaps over mountains at whose feet mere mortal strength lies down to die.

Reliance upon God, dear friends, is a virtue to which I would urge every believer; may the Holy Spirit work it in you. We have fallen upon evil times, this is the age of little men and cowards; but wherein does our littleness lie? Whence comes our cowardice? I believe that both are caused by our faith. If the Son of Man should come at this hour, would he find faith on the earth? If any one could find it he

ly, for he is the author of it, and wherever there is any faith his quickly discerns it; but yet if he were to come would he find it? ! it is sadly rare. Yet, my brethren, faith is the bread on which we feed, the air which gives breath to great souls. Believe in God and all things are possible unto you. Whenever there has been a revival of faith in the saints of God, they have been potent against all adverse forces. Why, even a wrong faith is mighty when rightly received. Have you not been astonished to hear of late Mahometanism has made great headway in the world, that in especially Mahometan proselytes have been vastly more numerous than Christian converts? What has been the reason? Why, because we never saw or heard of a Mahometan teacher who did not believe the word of the Koran. The teachers of the book believe in the Koran and believe in their prophet; hence their success, false though their faith be. On the other hand, nowadays it is easy to find a Christian teacher who believes next door to nothing of the very thing he is set to teach, and who in his secret heart does not reverence the doctrine which officially he declares. The worm of unbelief, the dry rot of infidelity and scepticism among professional teachers is eating out the heart and force of Christianity. He can never be strong for God who does not believe, ay, and believe with all his heart, soul, and strength, in the very marrow of his being. Christianity can never be strong till her disciples have strong convictions, till those who believe in revealed truth believe in it as assuredly as they believe in their own existence.

It is on the large scale, so it is with each one of us: we can never be strong when we believe in God; we are crushed like moths when unbelief betrays us. We can attempt any labour, and make any success when we have confidence in the Lord, but if we doubt whether we are his children, and whether his gospel be indeed the glorious gospel of the olden times, our strength evaporates, and we are like Samson when his hair was lost. We must possess strong faith in God, or we shall be unstable as water. O brethren and sisters, if in this church we shall have men and women who habitually live as if God were invisible, relying never upon mere opinion, either their own or that of others, but ascribing to the word of God sovereign authority, and accepting it as infallibly true, knowing it to be so; if we have among us men of principle because men of experience, men of forceful lives because those lives have struck their roots in eternal verities; if we have men and women who take trials, difficulties, everything in fact, to the one only God, and wait only upon God, we shall have heroes among us again, who will be pillars in the church which cannot be moved, bulwarks for our Israel against which assaults of the enemy shall never avail. God make each one of us so! I long in my own soul to get right away from everything but God, and to do his will and preach his truth as in his sight only. Let it be abhorred! The pleasing of men, let it be scouted! Attempt to gratify the tendencies of the age, let it be loathed! Caring nothing at our own personal interests, may God deliver us from it! For the truth as it is in Jesus may we live, and if need be die; for the honour may we feel that we could sacrifice everything; and in

his strength may we be sure that the battle is not doubtful, but the triumph must come to God and to the right. "My soul, wait thou upon God." That is our first point; would God we had learned its lesson.

II. The second part of the text is to notice David's APPROPRIATION OF THE DIVINE MERCY. "The God of my mercy." This is quite a unique expression; it occurs only in this Psalm. God is the God of mercy, and is frequently called so; he is also styled "The God of all grace," but you will find none but David calling him "The God of my mercy."

Notice that the pith of the title lies in the appropriating word "my." Luther used to say that the very soul of divinity lay in the possessive pronouns; another divine said that all the stir there ever has been in the world has been caused by *meum* and *tuum*, mine and thine. "It is mine," says one man; "It is mine," cries another man, and then comes a conflict. "It is mine," says one king; "Nay," says another, "it is not thine," and then fierce war begins. Nothing influences a man so much as that which he calls his own. "The God of my mercy." Now it is clear that *David appropriated to himself a portion of divine mercy as being peculiarly his*; and we shall never advance in the divine life unless we do the same, for the mercy which is in common to all men, of what avail is it to any man? But the mercy which any one man by faith grasps for himself, this is the mercy which will bless him and which he will prize above all things. When Gideon's men went out to fight they had not a whole row of pitchers between them, but every man held a pitcher in his own hand, and a trumpet too, and so the Midianites were routed. Solomon represents his armed men as having each man his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night; a thousand swords hung up in the armoury of David had been of little value, they only availed when each man had his own sword ready to his hand. In heavenly things it is always so: we may pray in the plural, but we must believe in the singular. Notice how the Lord's prayer runs: "Our Father which art in heaven." but if we would repeat the apostles' creed we must not say "we believe in God the Father," but "I believe." Believing must be in the first person singular; praying should have a width and compass about it to embrace all the saints, but believing must be by each one for himself—"The God of my mercy." What do you know about this, my dear hearers? Is a portion of the divine mercy really yours, so that another cannot seize it? Is there a lot in which you must stand in the end of the days, even as by faith you stand in it now, and call it all your own? Happy David, to be able to make this appropriation! Happy Christian, if God's grace has taught you to do the same!

I think he meant, too, that *there was a portion of mercy which he had already received*, which was, therefore, altogether his own. The "God of my mercy"—he meant the God of the mercy he had already experienced. Look at this for a minute. Well may it bring the tears into your eyes to think of it. The mercy which nursed you in your infancy, when you were dandled upon the knee of kindness; the mercy which watched over you in your youth and kept you when you were apt to stray; the mercy which restrained you from many a deadly

the mercy which guided you into that road where happy and holy
 things were waiting for you; the mercy which influenced you for
 Christ; the mercy, above all, which decided you for Christ, and
 shed you in his blood; the mercy which has followed you to this
 day and still follows you. Oh, bless the Lord that it has all come
 from himself, and think of him as the God of your mercy. Too little
 prize our mercies till they are removed from us. I have heard
 of a person who at fifty years of age was murmuring that he had suf-
 fered two long years of sickness, but one reminded him that he had
 lived forty-eight years of perfect health, in which he had never
 spent a single hour in bed through illness; and then he said to
 himself, "I will bless God, who might have given me forty-eight
 years of sickness and only two of health; that he has been pleased to
 allot that allotment. My mercies have been very great—far larger in
 number of his favours than the tale of my sufferings." Bless, then,
 at this moment, beloved, and take him to yourselves under that
 name, "The God of my mercy."

Remember, that all the mercy you have had is little compared
 to the *mercy you have yet to receive*. There is a portion of mercy
 reserved and labelled for you. As the rich father thinks, "This will I
 give to my eldest son, and that to the second, and that to the third,"
 so he puts by a portion for each of his children; so has God
 reserved out and allotted for each one of us some choice and special
 mercy fitted for our peculiar case, which no one can receive but our-
 selves but which we must and shall obtain. Is not our hymn delight-
 ful and suggestive where it sings—

"And a new song is in my mouth,
 To long-loved music set;
 Glory to thee for all the grace
 I have not tasted yet.

"I have a heritage of joy
 That yet I must not see:
 The hand that bled to make it mine,
 Is keeping it for me."

Let us be God for his reserves of mercy, for the blessing yet to be
 given, which is as sure as if we had it, kept in a better hand than
 reserved by him who bought it till the time appointed shall

"The God of my mercy," that is, of the mercy I have had, and
 that which is treasured up for me in the covenant purpose and
 among the sure mercies of David.

I think David made a larger grasp than this, for when he said,
 "The God of my mercy," he felt as if all the mercy in the heart of
 God was elongated to him. Let me utter a great saying, worth your
 holding up—if any one saint should have all the wants of all the
 saints in the world put upon him, and if his necessities should be
 such that nothing would supply them but the whole of the infinite
 mercy which fills the heart of God, that child of God should have
 that mercy which the Lord himself can dispense. Great as your
 needs may be, my dear brethren, all the mercy that is in God
 is to you, and is engaged to meet your case. Let me put it in

another light ; if there were no other person in the world but you, and God loved you infinitely and alone, would he not be able to do much for you if all his omnipotence was devoted to your good, and if all the thoughts of his grace centred upon you, and you were the focus of all his wise and loving purposes ? "Oh, yes," say you, "I should be favoured indeed." You are just as favoured as that, for the multiplicity of the objects of divine love necessitates no diminution to any one. God can love a million and love each one as intensely as if there were but one to be favoured. Our little minds are distracted with many objects. We cannot concentrate upon many, we are therefore straitened ; but the full concentrated love of the eternal God is set upon each one of his dear children. God is entirely yours, and not half of God ; the Saviour is yours, not a part of the Saviour ; God is all, and that all belongs to you in Jesus Christ. Is there not comfort here ? "The God of my mercy."

One other word about it, and it is this : when God is called "the God of my mercy," we may read it as being *the guarantor of mercy* to me. If we say such a person is the guardian of a child, that child is then particularly under his care. If God is the God of my mercy, then he stands in a particular relationship to my mercy, and binds himself to secure it to me. The constable of the Tower of London stands in relationship to it, and is concerned for its preservation. Now the Lord is not only the keeper and guarantor of my mercy, but the God of it, and therefore he is peculiarly interested in my mercy, and will see that it comes to me, and is by no means suffered to fail. He is more than the trustee of it, the security for it, the guarantee of it, the giver of it, the source of it, the security of it, he is the God of my mercy. What condescension is this ! He is the God of heaven, is not that his grand title ? Ay, but he is "the God of my mercy," as surely as he is the God of heaven and earth. He is the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, the God of angels, and "God over all, blessed for ever." He is all this, but he is also with equal truth "the God of my mercy." There is a command which says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," and if he would not have us take it in vain, we may rest assured he will not make it vain himself ; and if he calls himself, as he does here, "the God of my mercy," he cannot allow it to be an empty title, he will surely make it good. What is an offence in the creature will not be performed by the Creator, he will not make vain any one of those august titles which he has been pleased to take to himself. Your mercy is sure, O Christian, for God is the God of your mercy.

Now I want you all to pause a moment, and ask whether you really have appropriated by faith the mercy of God, and the God of the mercy. Why did not that unhappy *artiste* fly the other day ? Why did he fall to the ground a mangled mass ? Because his wings were not his own, or a part of himself. The smallest bat which ventures out in the evening twilight can fly, because it has its own wings, and the tiniest humming-bird which dives into a flower bell can fly, because its wings belong to it ; but this man had only a borrowed contrivance, a mechanical invention, which he could not appropriate to his own being ; another might use it as well as he, if indeed it could be used at all.

If you wish to fly, you must have wings of your own. Many religious professors have a mechanical religion; they have the baptism of babyhood, and the priestly efficacy of sacraments—a mere flying machine! It will not serve their turn, they must have faith and grace of their own; personal faith in a personal God. Those who have such appropriating faith shall mount up with wings as eagles, but no others can. Wings which are not your own wings will be of no use to you, but ensure your destruction; but if you are the humblest, weakest, and most obscure of all God's children, if you have a real faith of your own, so that you can say, "My God, my Saviour!" and can cry, "Abba, Father!" you shall mount aloft to his abode, and make your rest for ever hard by the throne of love. God grant us power to appropriate his precious things, and call him—"the God of my mercy."

III. The last and practical point is, we see in the text, thirdly, David CONFIDING IN GOD. "The God of my mercy shall prevent me." Prevent is an old English word, and it has shifted from its original meaning, so that the uninstructed reader is apt to be misled by it. Its old meaning is to go before, and that is indeed the root meaning of the word. Here it means to anticipate, to be before, to go before as a guide to make a way easy, to be beforehand. "The God of my mercy will prevent me," or anticipate me by his mercy. Now, it so happens that the Hebrew word may be read in all three tenses, and some have said it should be understood, "The God of my mercy *has* prevented me"; others "*does* prevent me"; and a third party, like our translators, read it, "*shall* prevent me." Whichever tense you choose is true, and the whole three put together may be viewed as the full meaning of the passage.

"The Lord *has* prevented me." Brethren, this is one of the grand doctrines of the gospel, the doctrine of eternal love, spontaneous, self-generated, having no cause but itself. God loved us before we loved him—he prevented us with love. Before his people were born God had elected and redeemed them, and prepared the gospel, by which in due time they are called. He is before us in all good things. Loving us our first parent had broken the covenant of works, the covenant of grace had been "ordered in all things and sure." In the eternal purpose the Lamb was slain from before the foundations of the world: the provision for atonement was made before sin actually existed. Before there was any defilement, there was an arrangement for cleansing from all iniquity; in the volume of the Book it had been written that Christ would come and do the Father's will, by the which will we are sanctified. Sin is a thing of time, but mercy is from everlasting. Transgression is but of yesterday, but mercy was ever of old. Before you and I sought the Lord, the Lord sought us. The first thought of conciliation was not with man, but with his God. Some theologians teach that the sinner takes the first step, but I never met with a child of God who would say that he himself did so; they all, speaking from experience, declare "we loved him because he first loved us." The grace of God is preventing grace, unsought, undesired, unmerited, preceding all good impressions and emotions, and coming to us when we are yet ungodly, and dead in trespasses and in sins. Before we thirsted the living water gushed from the smitten rock;

before we hungered the oxen and the fatlings were killed; before we were wounded the oil and wine were ready to be poured into the gashes; our Father knew that we should have need of these things, and he prevented us with the blessings of goodness by laying them up in store for us from of old. O Lord, thou hast the first hand with thy people; they seek thee early, but thou art up before them, thou hast distanced them in the race of affection: Alpha art thou indeed!

The Lord has prevented us, but the meaning of the passage is that *he does still prevent us*. Is he not daily doing so? You have many wants, but they are anticipated. Before you can feel the pinch of want the mercy is given. God goes before you day by day, and his paths drop fatness. You have been often fretting about what is to happen in a month's time, when you expect to be in distress. When the month has come there has been no distress because the supply has been provided. You have gone to the sepulchre, saying, "Who will roll us away the stone?" but when you have come to the spot the stone has been already removed; your troubles have been ended before they began. So, also, has the Lord prevented your sins. How often when you have sinned has the pardon for the sin, and the deliverance from its consequences, come upon you there and then, and restored you at once? while even yet more frequently the blessed God of your mercy has forestalled the temptation and prevented the sin altogether. Look at David with his heart angry, and his naked sword in his hand, attended by his furious followers. "I will go," says he, "and slay this fellow Nabal, and leave not a man of his house by the morning light. How dares he say, there be many servants that run away from their masters nowadays? I will let him know that if a man cannot be generous to David he shall at least be civil, or his head shall answer for it." David marches in hot passion, but at the moment when David puts his foot outside his tent God leads forth from Nabal's house a wise and gentle woman to be an angel of mercy to him. Abigail meets him half way, and turns him back from his design by telling him that if he would restrain his wrath, in after days it would be no grief to him that he had not avenged himself. Truly, David might say, "The God of my mercy hath prevented me. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me." Even in the common acceptation of the word "prevent" God has often so gone before us that he has prevented us from the commission of many sins, into which otherwise we should have fallen to our sorrow and damage.

Again, how often has he prevented our prayers? Before we have asked we have had; while we were yet calling we have received. I have asked the Lord sometimes for blessings, which have been on the road while I was asking, and I did not know it, and they have come almost before the words escaped my lips. Have you not known it so? "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." The desire of the righteous is granted oftentimes as soon as it takes shape, and before it is expressed.

Brethren, it will always be so. *God will prevent us*. A good captain, when he is marching an army through a country, takes care to make provision for every emergency. It is time for the soldiers to camp, and they need tents. Bring up the baggage wagons, here are

the tents which you ask for! The men must have their rations. Here they are! Serve them out! The meat needs cooking. See, there are the portable kitchens and the fuel! The army comes to a river by-and-by, how will they pass it? Why, the engineers are ready, and pontoons are very soon thrown across. It is wonderful how the well-skilled commander foresees every possible emergency, and has everything ready just at the nick of time. Much more is it so with our God. If any child of God be placed in a position where never a child of God was before, he shall get new light upon another part of God's character, and the world and the church shall be the wiser because of the man's peculiar difficulties. "The God of my mercy shall prevent me." March on, child of God, for God goes before you. Be assured of this, his angels fly around you, and you may hear the rustling of their wings if you have but faith enough, since the eternal God himself leads the van, march where he clears the course and your path shall be one of happiness and peace.

The Lord will prevent us if we seek more grace and higher attainments. Let us go from strength to strength, for at each halting place our table shall be spread. Let us climb the hill, for grace sufficient for the day awaits us at each stage of progress. Let us rise into spiritual manhood, for the blessings peculiar to that state are waiting for us. Let us endeavour to do more for Jesus than ever we have done, let us put forth greater effort, for God's Spirit will go before us to prepare the way. There is a sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees at the very time when we begin to bestir ourselves. When we preach, Jesus is with us, according to his promise. If we lift our hand in holy service, a hand unseen but omnipotent is lifted at the same instant. Strike, then, feeble one, for God strikes too. Advance, for God is with thee, and will give thee the victory.

We shall arrive at old age before long, and perhaps with old age will come decrepitude or sickness, but the God of mercy will go before us to prepare the land Beulah, in which we shall rest till he shall call us across the stream. As to death, when that shall come, I know, beloved, but the Lord will prevent you, for Jesus has gone before for the very purpose of preparing a place for you. When we expect friends we set open the gate, that when they come they may know that they are welcome. Christ has set heaven's gate open for us, and none can shut it. He awaits the coming of his people, and when they enter heaven they shall not be unexpected guests, but shall find each one his mansion furnished and ready for him. Our forerunner is where we soon shall be; we shall cause no bustle of preparation when we arrive, but we shall be welcomed home as our children are when on a set day they return to us. The God of my mercy will through the trackless ether precede me, and into the glory he will beckon me, and up to his throne he will conduct me.

So let us close with these three practical reflections. If he prevents us with mercy let us not hesitate to come to him. Loiter not, O soul, if thou wouldst have the mercy of God. Is God so quick? Wilt thou be slow? Does he go first, and wilt thou not follow? If any man or woman, or child in this place this morning desires salvation and eternal life, let him not hesitate to believe in Jesus, for the God of mercy has

gone before him. Come, and welcome; all things are ready, come ye to the gospel supper!

The next reflection is, is God so quick in mercy? Let us who are his people be very quick in service. Do not let us wait to have suggested to us by others what we should do. That is true love to Christ which does not need reminding, forcing, or exciting. When a man says to himself, "God has given me these mercies unasked, what shall I render to him? I will not turn to the law and say, 'This is what I ought to do,' neither will I require some good and earnest brother to stir me up to an unwilling duty, but I am eager to serve God—what can I do? What will he permit me to bring?" Some saints have thought of one offering, and some of another, and the Lord has been pleased with each one. Imitate the readiness of love which shone in the woman who had but one costly possession in the world, an alabaster box of very precious ointment. Nobody expected or advised her to take it and pour its contents upon the head of Jesus; indeed, there were those who reckoned such a gift an idle waste, but her own love bade her do it, and she consulted not with flesh and blood, she brought it out and broke it, and filled the house with perfume, while she poured the sacred nard upon the head of him she loved so well. Does no special act of consecration occur to you? Have you not some sacrifice to present? Can you not think out some design which shall be a memorial of your gratitude? Say in your heart, "My God, since thou dost prevent me, I cannot hope to keep pace with thy mercy, but at any rate I will not lag further behind thee than I must. When I have done all I can for thee, how little it is, but that little shall be done." George Herbert once described the good man as resolved "to build a spital, or mend common ways," and in his day these were acts of charity which piety delighted in; other good deeds are more fitting for these days. Houses for worship are wanted in many a populous district, and orphan children need to be fed. He who can buy no sweet cane with money, can bring time and zeal and effort, and these are precious. What then, my brother, will you do?

And now finally, believer, cast yourself into your Lord's arms. Have done with fretting; have done with anxiety and doubt. If you came in here this morning burdened, go out happy as the birds of the air. Mount like the lark to your God, and sing as you mount. Shower down your song among the grovelling sons of men while your eye is upon your Father's home, and your wings of faith bear you heavenward. God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—68, 690, 46.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

IS CONVERSION NECESSARY?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 19TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."—2 Corinthians v. 17.

A FEW days ago I was preaching in Lancashire upon the putting away of sin by our Lord Jesus, and the consequent peace of conscience enjoyed by the believer. In the course of the sermon I related my own conversion, with the view of showing that the simple act of looking to Jesus brought peace to the soul. Now, the diocese of Manchester is presided over by a bishop who has a deservedly high place in public esteem for his zeal, industry, and force of character; and, feeling that he did not agree with me, he has very properly taken an opportunity to warn the working men whom he addressed against drawing improper inferences from my story, and he has done this in a manner so courteous that I only wish all discussions were conducted in the same spirit. The best return I can make for his courtesy is to enlarge upon the subject, and carefully guard his utterances from injurious inferences, even as he has protected mine. The idea of controversy is not upon my mind at all, nor have I any other feeling towards Bishop Fraser than that which is honestly expressed in a hearty prayer that God may bless him; but I am thinking of the many who will read his remarks who, I trust, may afterwards read mine: and as the point is one of the utmost conceivable importance, and deeply concerns the souls of our hearers, it is well that neither should be misunderstood, and that by all means a truth so vital should be brought into prominence.

The bishop does not doubt for a moment that my own conversion was correctly described by me, and that like cases have occurred at other times: but he fears lest others should suppose that they must be converted in exactly the same manner. In that fear I fully participate, and it has ever been a special point with me to show that God's Spirit calls men to Jesus in divers ways. Some are drawn so gently that they scarce know when the drawing began, and others are so suddenly

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affected that their conversion stands out with noonday clearness. Perhaps no two conversions are precisely alike in detail; the means, the modes, the manifestations, all vary greatly. As our minds are not cast in the same mould, it may so happen that the truth which affects one is powerless upon another; the style of address which influences your friend may be offensive to yourself, and that which leads him to decide may only cause you to delay. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." The Holy Ghost is called "the free Spirit," and in the diversity of his operations that freeness is clearly seen. Again and again have I warned you against imitating others in the matter of conversion, lest you be found counterfeits, and it is well when another voice unites with me in the warning.

Yet in all true conversions there are points of essential agreement: there must be in all a penitent confession of sin, and a looking to Jesus for the forgiveness of it, and there must also be a real change of heart such as shall affect the entire after life, and where these essential points are not to be found there is no genuine conversion.

The bishop goes on to remark upon Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," and its description of the burdened pilgrim and his finding rest at the cross. The bishop mistakes honest John, for he says that "the pilgrim having failed to get his wife to take the same gloomy view of fleeing from the wrath to come, and to accompany him in his flight, set out alone. There they had a man who deserted his home and home duties, leaving them to take care of themselves; but if a man stayed at home and his heart was right, he would have been saved in the day of doom." Surely allegory is not to be read in this fashion. John Bunyan never meant to teach that any man should forsake his home and neglect his family; no one ever charged him with doing so himself; in his imprisonment he worked hard at tagging laces to support his family, and his affection for his poor blind child is well known. John Bunyan was no monk, but as true a father, citizen, and friend as ever lived. The passage is part of an allegory, and represents an awakened man as resolving to seek the Saviour, whether others would do so or not; a man alive to his own condition and responsibility, and therefore determined to pursue the right road, even if the nearest and dearest refused to bear him company. It is not implied that he left the company of his family in temporal things, for with these the allegory has nothing to do. I feel sure the bishop knows too well the value of decision of mind, and of that strong resolve to be right which dares to be singular, to say a word wittingly against one of the bravest of the virtues.

The bishop continues, "The pilgrim went on his journey, and at the sight of the cross, the great bundle, which was the burden of his past sins, fell off his back. Falling down before the cross, he thought of him who hung upon it, and of the great doctrine of atonement, and the burden dropped from his back, and he rose what is called 'a converted man.'" The bishop is inclined to think that this story of Bunyan's conversion has given a colour to a great part of what is called Protestant theology in these days. He has noticed that a great number of our theological ideas come rather from Milton and "the Pilgrim's Progress" than from the Bible, for he does not find a single case in the Bible at all analogous to or resembling the case of John Bunyan. He

then denies that the case of the penitent thief is at all to the point, or even the conversion of the apostle Paul, and he bids his hearers remember that it is "better not to dream those dreams of conversion that might happen to one and not to another." Now, so far as Milton is concerned, the bishop is right, but I demur to his statement with regard to Bunyan's "Pilgrim," and differ from him altogether in his judgment of Paul's conversion. He fears that some may imagine a particular manner of conversion to be necessary, but my fear is much greater than from Bishop Fraser's words far more will infer that no conversion is necessary at all. My fear is not so much that they should say, "I must be converted like John Bunyan," but that they will whisper, "It is all an idle tale; the bishop means that we have only to do our duty and be sober and honest, and all will be well, whether we are converted or not." Our text says that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new;" and my point is just this, that any man who is united to Christ has experienced a great change. I do not lay down hard and fast lines about how the conversion is to be wrought, but the word is imperative which says, "Ye must be born again," and the exhortation speaks to all mankind, "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Even to this hour our Lord saith, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

My line of discourse will be as follows: according to our text and many other Scriptures, *a great change is needed in any man who would be saved*; secondly, *this great change is frequently very marked*; and thirdly, *this change is recognisable by distinct signs*.

I. IN ORDER TO SALVATION A RADICAL CHANGE IS NECESSARY. This change is a thorough and sweeping one, and operates upon the nature, heart, and life of the convert. Human nature is the same to all time, and it will be idle to try to turn the edge of scriptural quotations by saying that they refer to the Jews or to the heathen, for at that rate we shall have no Bible left us at all. The Bible is meant for mankind, and our text refers to *any* man, of any country, and any age. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

We prove this point by reminding you, first, *that everywhere in Scripture men are divided into two classes*, with a very sharp line of distinction between them. Read in the gospels, and you shall find continual mention of sheep lost and sheep found, guests refusing the invitation and guests feasting at the table, the wise virgins and the foolish, the sheep and the goats. In the epistles we read of those who are "dead in trespasses and sin," and of others to whom it is said, "And you hath he quickened"; so that some are alive to God, and others are in their natural state of spiritual death. We find men spoken of as being either in darkness or in light, and the phrase is used of "being brought out of darkness into marvellous light." Some are spoken of as having been formerly aliens and strangers, and having been made fellow-citizens and brethren. We read of "children of God," in opposition to "children of wrath." We read of believers who are not condemned, and of those who are condemned already

because they have not believed. We read of those who have "gone astray," and of those who have "returned to the shepherd and bishop of their souls." We read of those who are "in the flesh and cannot please God," and of those who are chosen and called and justified, whom the whole universe is challenged to condemn. The apostle speaks of "us who are saved," as if there were some saved while upon others "the wrath of God abideth." "Enemies" are continually placed in contrast with those who are "reconciled to God by the death of his Son." There are those that are "far off from God by wicked works," and those who are "made nigh by the blood of Christ." I could continue till I wearied you. The distinction between the two classes runs through the whole of the Scriptures, and never do we find a hint that there are some who are naturally good, and do not need to be removed from the one class into the other, or that there are persons between the two who can afford to remain as they are. No, there must be a divine work, making us new creatures, and causing all things to become new with us, or we shall die in our sins.

The word of God, besides so continually describing two classes, very frequently and in forcible expressions speaks of an inward change by which men are brought from one state into the other. I hope I shall not weary you if I refer to a considerable number of scriptures, but it is best to go to the fountain-head at once. This change is often described as a *birth*. See the third chapter of the gospel of John, which is wonderfully clear and to the point, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." This birth is not a birth by baptism, for it is spoken of as accompanied by an intelligent faith which receives the Lord Jesus. Turn to John i. 12, 13, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." So that believers are "born again," and receive Christ through faith: a regeneration imparted in infancy and lying dormant in unbelievers is a fiction unknown to Holy Scripture. In the third of John our Lord associates faith and regeneration in the closest manner, declaring not only that we must be born again, but also that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. We must undergo a change quite as great as if we could return to our native nothingness and could then come forth fresh from the hand of the Great Creator. John tells us, in his first epistle, v. 4, that "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world," and he adds, to show that the new birth and faith go together, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." To the same effect is 1 John v. 1, "Whoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Where there is true faith, there is the new birth, and that term implies a change beyond measure complete, and radical.

In other places this change is described as a *quickening*. "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. ii. 1.) We are said to be raised from the dead together with Christ, and this is spoken of as being a very wonderful display of omnipotence. We read (Eph. i. 19) of "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward

believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." Regeneration is a very mighty work of divine strength, and by no means a mere figment fabled to accompany a religious ceremony.

We find this change frequently described as a *creation*, as, for instance, in the text, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" and this is no mere formality, or an attendant upon a rite, for we read in Romans vi. 15, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." No outward rites, though ordained of God himself, effect any change upon the heart of man; there must be a creating over again of the entire nature by the hand of God; we must be "created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. ii. 10), and we must have in us "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. iv. 24). What wonderful change that must be which is first described as a birth, as a resurrection from the dead, and then as an absolute creation. Paul, in Colossians i. 13, further speaks of God the Father, and says, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." John calls it a "passing from death unto life" (1 John iii. 14), no doubt having in his mind the glorious declaration of his Lord and Master: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John v. 24.)

Go more, as if to go to the extremity of forcible expression, Peter speaks of our conversion and regeneration as our being "begotten again." Hear the passage (1 Peter i. 3), "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." To the same purport speaks the apostle Paul in his first chapter, at the eighteenth verse: "Of his own will hath he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures."

My dear friends, can you conceive of any language more plainly indicative of a most solemn change? If it be possible with the human tongue to describe a change which is total, thorough, complete, and divine, these words do describe it; and if such a change be intended by the language here used by the Holy Spirit, then I am sure to find any meaning in the Bible, and its words are rather meant to edify than to instruct, which God forbid we should think. My counsel is to you who try to be contented without regeneration and conversion. I beseech you, do not be satisfied, for you never can be in heaven unless old things are passed away with you, and all things become new.

Further, the Scriptures speak of this great inner work as producing a wonderful change in the subject of it. Regeneration and conversion, the secret cause, and the other the first overt effect, produce a change in the character. Read Romans vi. 17, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Again at

verse 22, "Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Mark well the description the apostle gives in Colossians iii. 9, when, having described the old nature and its sins, he says, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man." The Book swarms with proof texts. The change of character in the converted man is so great, that "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," (Gal. v. 24.)

And as there is a change in character, so there is a change in feeling. The man had been an enemy to God before, but when this change takes place he begins to love God. Read Colossians i. 21, "And you, that were some time alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight."

This change from enmity to friendship with God arises very much from a change of man's judicial state before God. Before a man is converted he is condemned, but when he receives spiritual life we read "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." This altogether changes his condition as to inward happiness. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord;" which peace we never had before. "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

O brethren, conversion makes a difference in us most mighty indeed, or else what did Christ mean when he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? Does he after all give us no rest? Is the man who comes to Jesus just as restless and as devoid of peace as before? God forbid! Does not Jesus say that when we drink of the water which he gives to us we shall never thirst again? What! And are we to be told that there is never a time when we leave off thirsting, never a time when that living water becomes in us a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life? Our own experience refutes the suggestion. Does not Paul say in Heb. iv. 3, "We which have believed do enter into rest"? Our condition before God, our moral tone, our nature, our state of mind, are made by conversion totally different from what they were before. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Why, beloved, instead of supposing that we can do without conversion, the Scriptures represent this as being the grand blessing of the covenant of grace. What said the Lord by his servant Jeremiah? "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after these days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jer. xxxi. 33.) This passage Paul quotes in the Hebrews x. 16, not as obsolete, but as fulfilled in believers. And what has the Lord said by Ezekiel? (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.) Listen to the gracious passage, and see what a grand blessing conversion is;—"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit

another, and if in the old creation the fiat did it all, it does seem likely upon the very face of things that in the new creation the fiat of the eternal Word should be equally quick and powerful in its working. Look at the acts of God in the person of Christ when he was here among men. The water turns at once to wine, the fig-tree immediately withers away, the loaves and fishes are at once multiplied in the hands of the disciples. Miracles of healing were as a rule instantaneous. In one instance the Lord puts clay on the blind man's eyes, and sends him to wash; but lengthen the operation as much as you like, it is still very briefly summed up in "I washed and do see." Yonder paralytic man is lying on his bed, Jesus says to him, "Take up thy bed and walk," and he does so at once. The leprosy was cured with a touch, devils fled at a word, ears were unstopped instantly, and withered limbs restored. He spake to the waves and the winds and they were calm at once; and as to the resurrections which Christ worked, which are his acted parables of regeneration, they were all instantaneous. Jesus took the little girl by the hand, and said, "*Talitha cumi*," she opened her eyes and sat up. He bade the bier stand still on which was the young man: he said—"Young man, I say unto thee arise;" and he arose straightway. Even the carcase of Lazarus, which had begun to corrupt, yielded at once to his word. He did but say, "Lazarus, come forth," and there was Lazarus. As the Master worked on men's bodies, so does he constantly work upon men's souls, and it is according to analogy to expect that his works will be instantaneous. Such they constantly are, for are they not daily before us?

We might also look for many instances of vividness if we consider the work itself. If it be worthy to be called a resurrection, there must manifestly be a time in which the dead man ceases to be dead and becomes alive. Take the opposite process of dying: we commonly say that such a man was long in dying; that is a popular description, but strictly speaking, the actual death must be instantaneous. There is a time in which there is breath in the body, and another time in which there is none. So must it be in the reception of life; that life may seem to come by slow degrees into the soul, but it cannot really be so; there must be an instant up to which there was no life, and beyond which life began. Is not that self-evident? Is it wonderful that that instant should fix itself on the memory, and in many cases be the most prominent fact in a man's whole history?

It is called a creation. Now creation is necessarily a work which happens in an instant, for a thing either is or is not. There is no intervening space between non-existence and existence; there is the sharpest conceivable line between that which is not and that which is. So in the new creation, there must be a time when grace is not received, and a time when renewing it is, and we may naturally expect that in so grand a work there would be, in many cases, a marked boundary line at which the work begins.

But, brethren, we need not talk of what we might expect; let us look at the facts. What are the facts about the conversions mentioned in Scripture? We hear much of educational processes which supersede conversion, but they are among the many inventions unknown to apostolic history. The bishop tells us that he does not find a single case

in the Bible at all resembling the case of John Bunyan. It is very curious how very differently we read. I at once turn to Paul, but the bishop says he is not a case in point, for he did not feel the burden of sin fall off his back. I cannot guess how the bishop knows what Paul endured during his three days' blindness, but my own notion, gathered from Paul's after sayings and doings, is very different. The man was one moment an opponent of Christ, and the next moment was crying, "Who art thou, Lord?" For three days he was blind and fasted; was he not then feeling the power of the law, and casting away his own righteousness? And when Ananias came to tell him more fully the gospel, and to bid him arise and be baptised, and wash away his sins, was there no removal of sin? Did he remain as before? There were two things spoken of, he was to be baptised, and also to receive another and spiritual washing: was the first real and not the second? The apostle always speaks of the whole thing as if he had cast away his own righteousness and counted it but dung to lay hold on Christ, and he continually glories in having peace with God, though he did not claim perfection in the flesh. He had not attained perfection, but he had attained salvation. He calls himself the chief of sinners, but this was as a retrospect; surely Bishop Fraser does not really mean to insinuate that the great apostle still remained the chief of sinners? If so, I must say the morality of his teaching is not such as one would expect from him.

Some have said that Paul's case is a special and solitary one. But this is an error, for he says himself, that Jesus Christ in him showed forth all longsuffering *for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.* (1 Tim. i. 15, 16.) That which is a pattern is not a special case. Though the Lord does not always work to pattern in details, yet the case of Paul suddenly converted is the pattern rather than the exception.

Let us look at other instances. A Samaritan woman comes to the well to draw water, Christ speaks to her, she is converted, and goes away to tell the men of the city. Is not that a case of sudden conversion? Zaccheus is in the tree, he is a rich publican, and a sinner. Jesus cries, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down;" he comes down, receives Jesus into his house, and proves his salvation by his works. Is not that a sudden conversion? Matthew sits at the receipt of custom, another publican and sinner: Jesus says, "Follow me"; he rises and follows Jesus. Is not that a sudden conversion? Three thousand persons gather at Pentecost, Peter preaches to them, and tells them that Jesus whom they had murdered was really the Christ of God; they are pricked in the heart, they believe, and are baptised on the same day. Have we not here three thousand sudden conversions? Sudden enough to prove my point. Further on, the jailer has gone to his bed, having fastened Paul and Silas in the stocks; his prisoners pray and sing praises unto God, there is an earthquake, the jailer in alarm cries, "What must I do to be saved?" He believes in Jesus there and then, and is baptised with his believing household. Are not these "at all analogous to John Bunyan's pilgrim" and his losing his load? It really seems to me as if it would be much more difficult to find a gradual conversion in Scripture than a sudden one, for here

they come, one after another, men and women brought to Jesus Christ who knew him not before, in whom the Scripture is fulfilled, "I am found of them that sought me not."

Furthermore, we need not go back to Scripture for this. The matter of the conversion of souls is one about which I feel it a weariness to argue, because these wonders of grace happen daily before our eyes, and it is like trying to prove that the sun rises in the morning. By the space of twenty years there has certainly never occurred to me a single week, and I might with truthfulness say scarcely a solitary day, in which I have not heard of persons being converted by the simple preaching of the gospel either here or elsewhere, when I have borne witness for Christ; and these conversions have been in far the greater majority of instances very clear and well-defined. Sometimes the children of godly parents who have been long hearing the word are converted, and in them the inward change is as marked as if they had never heard the gospel before. Infidels become believers, Romanists forsake their priests, harlots become chaste, drunkards leave their cups, and, what is equally remarkable, Pharisees leave their self-righteous pride, and come as sinners to Jesus. Why, if this were the proper time and place, I might say to you now assembled, "Brothers and sisters, you who have experienced a great change, and know that you have experienced it, and can tell how it came about, stand up!" and you would rise in numbers like a host and declare, "Thus and thus, God met with us under the preaching of his truth, and thus did he turn us from darkness to marvellous light." I would to God that every man that heareth me this day had received such a distinct conversion that it would be so plain to him that he was a new creature that he could no more doubt it than he can doubt his existence.

III. Thirdly, THIS CHANGE IS RECOGNISABLE BY CERTAIN SIGNS. It has been supposed by some that the moment a man is converted he thinks himself perfect. It is not so among us, for we rather question the conversion of any man who thinks himself perfect. It is thought by others that a converted man must be henceforth free from all doubts. I wish it were so. Unhappily, although there is faith in us, unbelief is there also. Some dream that the converted man has nothing more to seek for, but we teach not so; a man who is alive unto God has greater needs than ever. Conversion is the beginning of a life-long conflict; it is the first blow in a warfare which will never end till we are in glory.

In every case of conversion there are these signs following. There is always a *sense of sin*. No man, rest assured, ever found peace with God without first repenting of sin, and knowing it to be an evil thing. The horrors which some have felt are not essential, but a full confession of sin before God, and an acknowledgment of our guilt, is absolutely required. "The whole," says Christ, "have no need of a physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Christ does not heal those who are not sick, he never clothes those who are not naked, nor enriches those who are not poor. True conversion always has in it a humbling sense of the need of divine grace.

It is also always attended with simple, true, and real faith in Jesus

Christ ; in fact, that is the king's own mark, and without it nothing is of any worth. "Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life ;" and that passage is put side by side with "ye must be born again," in the same address, by the same Saviour, to the same inquirer. Therefore we gather that faith is the mark of the new birth, and where it is, there the Spirit has changed the heart of man ; but where it is not, men are still "dead in trespasses and sin."

Conversion may be known, next, by this fact, that it changes the whole man. It changes the principle upon which he lives ; he lived for self, now he lives for God ; he did right because he was afraid of punishment if he did wrong, but now he shuns evil because he hates it. He did right because he hoped to merit heaven, but now no such selfish motive sways him, he knows that he is saved, and he does right out of gratitude to God. His objects in life are changed : he lived for gain, or worldly honour ; now he lives for the glory of God. His comforts are changed : the pleasures of the world and sin are nothing to him, he finds comfort in the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. His desires are changed : that which he once panted and pined for he is now content to do without ; and that which he once despised he now longs after as the hart panteth after the water brooks. His fears are different ; he fears man no more, but fears his God. His hopes are also altered. His expectations fly beyond the stars.

"He looks for a city which hands have not piled ;
He pants for a country by sin undefiled."

The man has begun a new life. A convert once said, "Either the world is altered or else I am." Everything seems new. The very faces of our children look different to us, for we regard them under a new aspect, viewing them as heirs of immortality. We view our friends from a different stand-point. Our very business seems altered. Even taking down the shutters of a morning is done by the husband in a different spirit, and the children are put to bed by the mother in another mood. We learn to sanctify the hammer and the plough by serving the Lord with them. We feel that the things which are seen are shadows, and the things which we hear are but voices out of dreamland, but the unseen is substantial, and that which mortal ear hears not is truth. Faith has become to us "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

I may go on to talk about this, but none will understand me except those who have experienced it, and let not those who have not experienced it say it is not true. How do they know ? How can a man bear witness to what he has *not* seen ? What is the value of testimony from a man who begins by saying "I know nothing about it" ? If a credible witness declares that he knows such a thing to have happened it would be easy to find fifty persons who can say that they did not see it, but their evidence goes for nothing. Here are men of position, quite as keen in business, and able to judge between fact and fiction as other men, and they tell you solemnly that they have themselves experienced a wonderful, thorough, and total change of

nature. Surely if their honest testimony would be taken in any court of law, it ought to be taken in this case. Brethren, I pray that we may know what this change is, and if we do know it, I again pray that we may so live that others may see the result of it upon our characters, and inquire what it means.

The phenomena of conversion are the standing miracles of the church. "Greater things than these shall ye do," said Christ, "because I go to my Father;" and these are some of the greater things which the power of the Holy Ghost still performs. This day the dead are raised, blind eyes are opened, and the lame are made to walk. The spiritual miracle is greater than the physical one. These spiritual miracles show that Jesus lives and puts life and power into the gospel. Tell me of a ministry which never reclaims the drunkard, never calls back the thief to honesty, never pulls down the self-righteous and makes him confess his sin; that, in a word, never transforms its hearers; and I am sure that such a ministry is not worth the time which men spend in listening to it. Woe unto the man who at the last shall confess to a ministry fruitless in conversions. If the gospel does not convert men, do not believe in it; but if it does, it is its own evidence, and must be believed. It may be to some of you a stumbling-block, and to others foolishness, but unto those who believe it is the power of God unto salvation, saving them from sin.

Beloved hearers, may we all meet in heaven; but to meet in heaven we must all be renewed, for inside yonder gates of pearl none can enter but those who are new creatures in Christ Jesus our Lord. God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John iii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—175, 448, 603.

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THE SAD PLIGHT AND SURE RELIEF.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the godly."—Romans v. 6.

I was sitting the other day with an aged believer who is a local teacher among our Wesleyan friends, he said to me, "I cannot pe in the course of nature to stand up in the pulpit many more es; therefore, every time I preach now, I preach of nothing but us Christ. And I said to the people the other day, 'You will when I am dead and gone, "Poor old Mr. So-and-so will come and ach to us no more, but as he got older and older the more he ach about Jesus Christ; till for the last few months of his life old man never spoke about anything but his Master."'" Then, if confidentially addressing himself to me, he said, "I should like leave just that impression upon the people's minds when I am en from them." The resolution seems to me so good that I think it might be taken up by us who are younger, and adopted as our n. Paul, before he was "Paul the aged," said, "I determined not know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." ere is nothing like striking at the centre, and keeping to vital nts; and if we are keeping to Christ crucified, we are keeping to t which will save souls, which will build up believers, and which l glorify God. But, dear friends, if we might be allowed to go ay from this subject sometimes, yet certainly not on an evening : this, when we are about to gather around the table which is led with the memorials of our Redeemer's passion. To-night, you are believers in Jesus ought to have no eye for any object but , no ear for any sound but that which tells of him; indeed, no rt with which to relish any theme save your crucified Lord. ad, deaf, dead, to every worldly consideration let us be just now,

but all alive, all awake and all aglow with love to him, and the desire to have fellowship with him.

Our text brings us at once to the cross, and it sheds a light upon our former estate; lets us see where we were, and what was wanted to make us the children of God. Do ye ask, How did our Redeemer view us when he died for us? The response is here clearly given, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Thus we have a twofold description of the state in which Christ viewed mankind when he shed the blood of redemption. The men for whom his propitiation was offered were "without strength," and they were "ungodly." If you or I have any part or lot in the matchless death of Jesus, we must feel ourselves to have been in just this condition; for it cannot have any relation to any persons but those who by nature are "without strength," and "ungodly."

I. THAT EACH MAN FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED WAS WITHOUT STRENGTH IS OBVIOUS.

He was *legally weak*. Before God's bar he had a weak case, a case without strength. He stood up as a prisoner to be tried, and of all the cases that were ever brought into court his was the most destitute of power. He was without strength. To make the case our own, as it really is ours, we could not deny the charge that we had broken the law, we could not set up an *alibi*, nor could we put in a plea of extenuation. The fact was clear. Our own conscience vouched for it, as well as the record of God's providence. We could not make apologies, for we have sinned wilfully, sinned against light and against knowledge, sinned repeatedly, sinned without any necessity, sinned with an extravagant wilfulness, sinned with divers aggravations, after we knew sin to be exceedingly sinful before God, and extremely injurious to ourselves; yea, we sinned deliberately and presumptuously when we knew the penalty—when we understood what we should lose for want of obedience, and what we should incur as the chastisement of transgression. I say again, man's case is well described as being extremely weak. Looked at legally it is utterly without strength. No advocate who understood the case would have ventured to plead it, except that one glorious advocate who did plead it, but at the cost of his own life. He knew that, if he undertook it, and stood up to plead with God for us, he must die for it, for it was a case in which, before the law, we were without strength. We had no good works to be a set-off to our sin; we had no hope of ever performing any in the future which could ever stand in the stead of the good works which ought to have been done in the past. The case, put however it might be, broke down utterly, and the prisoner himself, if, indeed, able to speak the truth, would be compelled to say,

"Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must confess thee just in death;
And if my soul be sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well."

We were without strength. It was a bad case altogether, and could not be defended.

And man, by nature, is morally weak. We are so weak by nature that we are carried about like dust, and driven to and fro by every wind that blows, and swayed by every influence which assails us. Man is under the dominion of his own lusts—his pride, his sloth, his love of ease, his love of pleasure. Man is such a fool that he will buy pleasure at the most ruinous price; will fling his soul away as if it were some paltry toy, and barter his eternal interests as if they were but trash. For some petty pleasure of an hour he will risk the health of his body; for some paltry gain he will jeopardise his soul. Alas! alas! poor man, thou art as light as the thistledown, which goes this way or that, as the wind may turn. In thy moral constitution thou art as the weathercock, which shifts with every breeze. At one time man is driven by the world: the fashions of the age prevail over him, and he obsequiously follows them; at another time a clique of small people, notables in their little way, is in the ascendant, and he is afraid of his fellow-men. Threatenings awe him, though they may be but the frowns of his insignificant neighbours; or he is bribed by the love of approbation, which may possibly mean no more than the nod of the squire, or merely the recognition of an equal. So he sacrifices principle and runs with the multitude to do evil. Then the evil spirit comes upon him, and the devil tempts him, and away he goes. There is nothing which the devil can suggest, to which man will not yield while he is a stranger to divine grace. And if the devil should let him alone, his own heart suffices. The pomp of this world, the lust of the eye, the pride of life—any of these things will drive men about at random. See them rushing to murder one another with shouts of joy: see them returning blood-red from the battle-field, and listen to the acclamations with which they are greeted, because they have killed their fellow-men. See how they will go where poison is vended to them, and they will drink it till their brain reels, and they fall upon the ground intoxicated and helpless. This is pleasure which they pursue with avidity, and having yielded themselves up to it once they will repeat it again, till the folly of an evil hour becomes the habit of an abandoned life. Nothing seems to be too foolish, nothing too wicked, nothing too insane, for mankind. Man is morally weak—a poor, crazy child. He has lost that strong hand of a well-trained perfect reason which God gave him at the first. His understanding is blinded, and his foolish heart is darkened; and so Christ finds him, when he comes to save him, morally without strength.

Now, I know I have described exactly the condition of some here. They are emphatically without strength. They know how soon they yield. It is only to put sufficient pressure upon them, and they give way despite their resolutions, for their strongest resolves are as weak as reeds, and when but a little trial has come, away they go back to the sins which in their conscience they condemn, though nevertheless they continue to practise them. Here is man's state, then—legally weak and morally weak.

But, further, man is, above all things, *spiritually without strength*. When Adam ate of the forbidden fruit he incurred the penalty of death, and in that penalty we are all involved; not that he at once died naturally, but he died spiritually. The blessed Spirit left him. He

became a soulish or natural man. And such are we. We have lost the very being of the Spirit by nature. If he comes to us, there is good need he should, for he is not here in us by nature. We are not made partakers of the Spirit at our natural birth. This is a gift from above to man. He has lost it, and *the Spirit*—that vital element which the Holy Ghost implants in us at regeneration—is not present in man by his original generation. He has no spiritual faculties, he cannot hear the voice of God, he cannot taste the sweets of holiness. He is dead, ay, and in Scripture he is described as lying like the dry bones that have been parched by the hot winds, and are strewn in the valley dry, utterly dry. Man is dead in sin. He cannot rise to God any more than the dead in the grave can come out of their sepulchres of themselves and live. He is without strength—utterly so. It is a terrible case, but this is what the text says, “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

Putting all these things into one, man by nature, where Christ finds him, is utterly devoid of strength of every sort for anything that is good—at least, anything which is good in God's sight, and is acceptable unto God. It is of no use for him to sit down and say, “I believe I can force my way yet into purity.” Man, you are without strength till God gives you strength. He may sometimes start up in a kind of alarm, and say, “It shall be done,” but he falls back again, like the madman who after an attack of delirium, sinks anon to his old state. It will not be done. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” If so, then he that is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well. Not till then, by his own unaided strength can he perform any right and noble purpose. Nay, what am I talking about? He has no strength of his own at all. He is without strength, and there he lies—hopeless, helpless, ruined, and undone, utterly destroyed; a splendid palace all in ruin, through whose broken walls sweep desolate winds with fearful wailings, where beasts of evil name and birds of foulest wing do haunt, a palace majestic even in ruins, but still utterly ruined and quite incapable of self-restoration. “Without strength.” Alas! alas! poor humanity!

But the persons for whom Christ died are viewed by him from the cross as being “ungodly,” that is to say, men without God. “God is not in their thoughts.” They can live for the month together, and no more remember him than if there were no God. God is not in their hearts. If they do remember him, they do not love him. God is scarcely in their fears. They can take his name in vain, profane his Sabbath, and use his name for blasphemy. God is not in their hopes. They do not long to know him, or to be with him, or to be like him. Practically, unconverted men have said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?” If they do not say it in so many words, they do imply it by a daily neglect of God. Even if they take up with religion, yet the natural man sticks to the sentiments or the ritual that belong to his profession, subscribing to a creed, or observing a series of customs, while he remains utterly oblivious of that communion with God which all true religion leads us to seek, and therefore he never gets to God. He adapts himself to the outward form, but he does not discern the Spirit. He listens to pious words, but he does

to feel them. He joins in holy hymns, but his heart does not sing. He even gets him down on his knees and pretends to pray, and all the while his heart is wandering far from God. He does not commune with his Maker, and he cannot, for he is alienated from his Creator, or, as the text puts it, he is ungodly.

"Now," say you, "you have made man out to be a strange creature." Believe me, I have not painted the picture one-half so black as it is, nor can I. But do not be angry with me for so painting it. So much the better for you, for now you see there is no man too bad to be included in this description—without strength and ungodly. For such as these did Christ die. The description of the men for whom Christ died has not one letter of goodness in it. It describes them as hopelessly, helplessly bad. Yet for such Christ died. O sirs, I am not going to tell you that Christ died for saints. He died for sinners, not for the godly, but for the ungodly, not for the strong in grace, strong in morals, and the like, but for those who were without strength. Truly I know he died for the saints, but who made them saints? When he died for them they were sinners. I know he died for those whom he has made "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," but who made them strong? When he died for them they were as weak as others. All the difference between Peter in heaven and Judas in hell is a difference made by free rich sovereign grace. There was the same raw material to begin with in one as in another; and Jesus Christ looked upon men not at their best, when he laid down his life for their redemption, but at their worst. This is clear, plain, it is self-evident: had they been whole they would not have needed a physician; if they had not been lost they would not have needed a Saviour; if the disease had not been very bad they would not have needed so matchless a medicine as the blood of Christ; if they had not been helplessly lost, there could have been no necessity for omnipotence to step in to effect their rescue, and had not the ruin been terrible to the last degree, it would not have been demanded that God himself should come in human flesh, and make expiation for guilt by his own death upon the cross. The glory of the remedy proves the desperateness of the disease. The grandeur of the Saviour is a sure evidence of the terribleness of our lost condition. Look at it, then, and as man sinks Christ will rise in your esteem, and as you value the Saviour so you will be more and more stricken with terror because of the greatness of the sin which needed such a Saviour to redeem us from it.

Thus I have described the way in which Christ viewed us when he died for us. I only wish the Spirit of God would give to poor trembling sinners the comfort which this doctrine ought to give. You will say, "Oh, I am one of the worst in the world." Christ died for the worst in the world. "Oh, but I have no power to be better." Christ died for those that were without strength. "Oh, but my case condemns itself." Christ died for those that legally are condemned. "Ay, but my case is hopeless." Christ died for the hopeless. He is the hope of the hopeless. He is the Saviour not of those partly lost, but of the wholly lost. Your case, however bad it may be, must come within the sweep of the glorious arm which

wields the pierced hand. Christ came to save the very vilest of the vile.

II. But now, secondly, the text tells us WHEN CHRIST INTERPOSED TO SAVE US. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

What does it mean by "due time"? Why, it means that the death of Christ occurred at a proper period. I cannot suggest any other period in time which would have been so judiciously chosen for the death of the Redeemer as the one which God elected; nor can I imagine any place more suitable than Calvary, outside the gates of Jerusalem. There was no accident about it. It was all fixed in the eternal purpose, and for infinitely wise reasons. We do not know all the reasons, and must not pretend to know them, but we do know this, that at the time our Saviour died sin among mankind in general had reached a climax.

There never was a more debauched age. It is impossible to read the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, and to understand its testimony, without feeling sick at the depravity it records. It is such a desperate, and withal such a truthful description of the infamous vices into which men had fallen in those days, that we feel that they must have gone, in fact, beyond all that we could suppose that the vilest imagination could have fabled. Indeed, so far as our modern time is concerned, the annals of crime are silent as to such atrocities, and, for the most of us, it surpasses our belief that licentiousness should ever have grown so extravagant in committing wilful violations of nature, and indulging a propensity to revel in loathsome folly and unnecessary vice. Their own satirists said that there was no new vice that could be invented. Any person, who has passed through Naples by Herculaneum and Pompeii, and seen the memorials of the state of society in which those cities existed, will almost rue the day in which he ever saw what he did, for there is no lazar-house that is so foul as was the common life of the Romans of that age; and, in all probability, the Romans were as good as any other nation then existing upon earth. Their very virtue was but painted vice. What little of virtue had existed among mankind before was gone out. Socrates and Solon, so much vaunted everywhere, were in the habit of practising vices which I dare not mention in any modest assembly. The very leaders of society would have done openly things which we should now be committed to prison for mentioning, which it is not lawful to think of. Society was rotten through and through. It was a stench, and offensive to the utmost by its corruption. But it was then, when man had got to his worst, that on the bloody tree Christ himself was lifted up to be a standard of virtue—to be a brazen serpent for the cure of the multitudes of mankind who everywhere were dying of the serpent's bites. Christ came at a time when the wisdom of man had got to a great height, and, whenever it does get to a great height, man becomes an extraordinary fool. The various masters of philosophy were then going up and down the earth seeking to dazzle men with the brightness of their teaching, but their science was absurdity, and their morals were a systematised immorality. Putting the whole of it together, whatever was true in what they taught, our commonest Sunday-school child

understands ; but the bulk of it was altogether foolishness, couched in paradoxical terms to make it look like wisdom. "The world by wisdom knew not God."

But, surely, man had a religion at that time ! He had ; but man's religion—well, the less we say about the religion which existed when Christ came into the world the better. One of their own poets, speaking of the Egyptians, ridiculed them by saying, "O happy people, who grow your gods in your own kitchen garden !"—for they worshipped leeks and onions. These well-trained and tutored people embalmed the ibis and the cat, and made these objects of religious reverence. If you had stepped into the temple of Isis anywhere, you would soon have discovered emblems of the utmost obscenity ; and the holy rites of the common religion of the period—the *holy* rites, I say, done in honour of God, were acts of flagrant sin. The temples were abominable and the priests were abominable beyond description. And where the best part of man, his very religion, had become so foul, what could we expect of his ordinary life ? To give a boy a Lempriere's Dictionary, as schoolmasters do, is, I believe, to debauch that boy's mind, though the most of its execrable records concern the religion of the period of which I am now speaking. If such were the religion of the time, O God, what must its irreligion have been ? But was there not a true religion in the world somewhere ? Yes, there was, and it was in Judea. But those who inherited the canon of divine revelation, what manner of men were they ? Not one bit better than the heathen, for they were gross hypocrites. Tradition had made void the law of God. Ritualism had taken the place of spiritual worship. The Pharisee stood with uplifted eyes, and thanked God that he was not as other men were, when he had got in his pocket the deeds of a widow's state of which he had robbed her. The Sadducee came forth and annulled his superior light and intelligence, while at the same time he betrayed his gross darkness and his dire scepticism, for he said that there was no angel, or resurrection, or spirit. The best men of the period in Christ's days said to him, because he was holy, "Away with such a fellow from the earth !" I have heard men talk of regicides, as if they were strange beings ; but, O earth, thou art a regicide ; nay, worse than that, thou art a deicide, for didst thou not put the Son of God himself to death ? A certain flowery orator once said, "O virtue, thou art so fair and lovely, that if thou wert to come on earth all men would adore thee." But virtue did come on the earth, clothed not in helmet and in casque, nor with iron hand to crush the sons of men, but it came in the silken garments of love and peace, personified by the incarnate Saviour ; and what said the world to virtue ? They said, "Crucify him, crucify him !" And the only answer the world could give to the question, "Why, what evil hath he done ?" was "Crucify him, crucify him !" They would not have him live upon the face of the earth.

Now, it was when men had got to this pitch, in due time, that Christ came to die for them. If he had sat up in heaven and launched his thunderbolts at them ; if, from the heights of glory, he had commissioned his mailed seraphim and sworded cherubim to come and sweep the whole race away, and bid the bottomless pit open wide her

jaws and swallow up this disgusting horde of creatures, none could have blamed him ; they deserved it well. But, instead of that, the pure and Holy One comes down to earth himself to suffer, and to bleed, and die, that these wretches,—yea, that we ourselves—might live through him.

Thus I have described how he looked upon us, and at what time he came.

III. But now, thirdly—and, oh ! that these lips had language, or that this heart could do without poor lips to tell this tale—WHAT DID HE DO FOR US ? There we were. Do not think that you are any better than the rest, or the worst, of our fallen race. If the current of social habits, and the spread of Christian light make us outwardly better, we had only to have been put in the circumstances of those heathen, and we should soon have been as bad as they. The heart is corrupt in every case ; and yet Jesus came. What did he do for us ?

Well, first, he made the fullest degree of sacrifice that was possible. To lift us up he stooped. He made the heavens, and yet he lay in Bethlehem's manger. He hung the stars in their places, and laid the beams of the universe, and yet he became a carpenter's son, giving up all his rank and dignity for love's dearsake ; and then when he grew up he consented to be the servant of servants, and made himself of no reputation. He took the lowest place ; "he was despised and rejected of men ;" he gave up all ease and comfort, for he had not where to lay his head ; he gave up all health of body, for he bore our sickness, and he bared his back to the smiters that the chastisement of our peace might fall upon him ; he gave up the last rag he had, for they took his own raiment from him, and upon his vesture did they cast lots ; he gave up for the world all esteem. They called him a blasphemer. Reproach broke his heart, but he gave that heart up for us ; he gave his body to the nails, and his heart to the spear, and he could do no more. When at last he gave his life, "It is finished," said he ; and they took down his mangled body from the tree and laid it in the grave. Self-sacrifice had reached its climax ; further he could not go ; but he could not have saved us if he had stopped short of that. So lost, so utterly lost we were, that without this extreme self-devotion—till it could be said, "He saved others ; himself he could not save"—without this self-devotion, I say, he could not have saved so much as one of us.

In the fact that Christ's self-sacrifice went so far I see evidence of the extreme degree of our need. It may be thought, perhaps, that I speak in excitement when I describe the lost estate of man. Sirs, I have felt that lost estate in my own soul, and I do but tell you what I do know ; and if you had ever felt it—and I pray God you may if you never have—you would own that it cannot be exaggerated. But look

at this. I challenge any reasonable man to controvert the position. Would he who is "God over all, blessed for ever," have come from the height of heaven, given up all that is grand and honourable, have made himself of no reputation, and have humbled himself even to the death, to save us, if it had not been a most terrible ruin to which we were subject? Could there want such a mighty heave of the eternal shoulders if it had not been a dead lift indeed? Here is something more than a Samson wanted to pull up the gates, and posts, and bars of our great dungeon, and carry all away upon his mighty shoulders that we might never be prisoners again. The splendid deed of grace which Christ has accomplished was not a triviality, it could not be; and therefore there must have been some dire and urgent ruin imminent upon the sons of men for Christ to make so tremendous a sacrifice as to bleed and die for us.

And, mark you, brethren, while this death of Christ, was to him the height of sacrifice, and while it proved the depth of our ruin, it was the surest way of our deliverance. Behold how man has broken the law. Can you help him, can you help him, ye pure spirits, that stand round the throne of God? Can you help him? Can you come and encourage him, cheer him, give him hope that perhaps he may do better? Your encouragements are all in vain, for you encourage him to do what cannot be done. He is so ruined that the case is beyond your aid. But suppose God himself should take account of it. Ay, now there is hope for him. But, peradventure, God should show his pity and give his counsel; that would not go far in helping him. Then there is the hope but slender. But what if God will go as far as ever God can go—does that want correction? No, let it stand. I cannot speak more correctly than that. I know of nothing that God the eternal himself could do more than to become incarnate and, in human flesh, to bleed and die for man. God has here shown all the attributes and perceptions of his Godhead. What can I say more? He has purposed and effected the utmost that infinite love can do for our infinite wretchedness. Well, if God will do so much that no more can be done, and God is infinite, then, depend upon it, that is the surest thing to be done. It claims admiration and defies argument, while it excites inquiry.

Do ye ask how will he do it? Well, Christ shall take upon himself the responsibility for this sin; he shall stand in the sinner's place; he shall be punished as if he had committed the sin, though in him was no sin. The vials of wrath that were due to human transgression shall be poured upon him. The sword of justice that ought to be sheathed in the sinner's breast shall be plunged into the sinner's heart. Ah! was there ever such a plan devised? The just dies for the unjust; the offended Judge himself suffers for the

offence against his own law. Oh, matchless plan! This, indeed, makes sure work for man; for now it takes him, sinful and lost as he is, and puts another in his place who is able to bear his sin, and puts man into the place of that other. Yea, hear it. It puts the sinner into the Saviour's place, and God looks upon the Saviour as if he had been the sinner, and then upon the sinner as if he had been the perfect One. There is a transposition! Christ and the sinner change places. He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. This is the way to do it; ay, and this is the way to sweep out of the path all attempts on our part to help, for this was so great a work that Jesus Christ himself must sweat while he did it; he must bleed his soul away to accomplish it. O ye self-righteous ones, stand back! With broken limbs and dislocated bones ye come hobbling up to help this glorious champion. Away with you! You are without strength, and you are ungodly by nature. What can you do in this great enterprise? Christ has done it, and every part of it is such a wondrous transaction that the very majesty thereof might make self-righteousness cover its face and fly away abashed, crying, "O God, I must lie down and die; I cannot live; I have seen the righteousness of Christ, and there is no more room for me."

Come, brethren and sisters, since my words fail to set out what the Saviour has done, I want you to think it over, and I want you to love him. For my part, I want to love and adore him too, with all my heart, and soul, and strength, for dying for me, for standing in my place and stead, that I, a lost, condemned, and all but damned sinner, might yet live and be justified and be loved and adopted and accepted, and at last crowned with glory for his dear sake.

IV. Time fails me, and therefore I must hasten to the last point, which is, What then? what then? "Christ died for the ungodly." What then?

Then sin cannot shut any man out from the grace of God if he believes. The man says, "I am without strength." Christ died for us when we were without strength. The man says, "I am ungodly." Christ died for the ungodly. I remember how Martin Luther hammers on that word, "He gave himself for our sins." "There," says Martin, "it does not say he gave himself for our virtues. He thinks better of our sins than our virtues," says he. "He gave himself for our sins." He never says a word about our excellencies—never a syllable about our goodness. Rotten trash! But he gave himself for our sins. "Oh," says a man, "I would come to Christ if I were cleaner." Man, he did not die for the clean: he died for the filthy, that he might make them clean. "I would come to the Great Physician," says one, "if I were whole." Man, he never came to die for those that are whole. The physician does not come to cure those that are

whole, but those that are sick. Look at it in this light. If thou hast committed every crime in the whole catalogue of sin, no matter what that crime may be, if thou wilt repent of this sin, and look to Christ, there is pardon for thee. There is more, there is a new life for thee, and a new heart for thee. There is a new birth for thee, so that thou shalt be no more a child of Satan, but a child of God. And that is to be had now. Oh, the splendour of the grace of God! Our sins stand like some tremendous mountain, and the grace of God plucks that mountain right up by its roots and hurls it into the sea. It shall never be seen again. Christ's blood shall cover it. Christ shall be seen, and not you. He will stand between you and God, and God will see you through the wounds of Christ if you believe in him, and you shall be "accepted in the Beloved." I have not put this too strongly, either. The text says, "When we were without strength he died for the ungodly," and it is to the ungodly and those without strength that this message is sent.

But, what then? What more? Why, then Jesus will never cast away a believer for his after sins, for if when we were without strength he died for us, if, when we were ungodly, he interposed on our behalf, will he leave us now that he has made us godly? Did you notice the argument of the whole chapter as it was read to you just now? It is the strongest and most unassailable argument that I can deem possible. The apostle declares that "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us: much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him; for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved through his life." Notice the triple cord of reasoning here employed. When we were enemies, he blest us. Much more now that we are reconciled. When we were enemies, he reconciled us; will he not now save us? Shall those who are reconciled be afterwards left to perish? And since we are so freely and fully saved by the death of Christ: much more shall we be saved by his life. If his death did so much, much more must his life be a motive for our confidence. Oh, it is clear! it is clear! it is clear! Though I may have backslidden and may have sinned, yet I have only to go back to my Father, and say, "Father, I have sinned," and I am his child still, and he will fall upon my neck and kiss me, and I shall yet sit at his table, and hear music and dancing, because he that was lost is found. It is clear now from the text.

Again, it is equally clear that every blessing any child of God can want he can have. He that spared not his own Son when we were without strength and ungodly, cannot deny us inferior blessings now that we are his own dear children. Go, child of God, with confidence

to your heavenly Father. He gave you Jesus, what can he keep back from you?

What then? Let us ask the question once more; and I think a spontaneous outflow of gratitude should furnish the reply. If, when we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly, let us praise him! let us praise him! let us praise him! Oh, if he came when there was nothing to draw him, when, if he looked us through and through, he could not see a good point in us, if he loved us so that he would save us when we were altogether bad, hopeless, and helpless, why, the very least thing we can ever do is to love him and praise him as long as we have any being. I am of that old woman's mind who said, "If Jesus Christ does save me he shall never hear the last of it." Nor shall he. We will talk of it, and we will praise him, and we will bless him for it as long as immortality endures. "What, does Christ Jesus take the utterly unworthy?" Yes, just so. Then, when he takes them, how they will serve him! Love him? Love him? Is there a question about it? When he has forgiven me everything freely, and saved me by the shedding of his own blood, can I forbear to love him? I were worse than a devil if I did not love him. Aye, while this heart can beat, while memory holds her throne, his name shall be dearest of all names, and his service the pleasure of life, if he do but give me grace to stand to this. Say you not so, beloved? I am sure you do. And may he of his mercy touch the heart of some great sinner to-night! Perhaps there is a woman that is a sinner here. Oh, that you may come to wash his feet with your tears and wipe them with the hairs of your head, because of his love to you. Perhaps there is some thief here. Oh, that you might be with him in Paradise! And I am sure, if he pronounces you absolved, you will sing more sweetly in heaven than any other, because of what he has done for you. Blessed be thy name, O Son of God, for ever and for ever! And all our hearts say "Amen."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans v.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

AN EARNEST WARNING AGAINST LUKEWARMNESS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 26TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."—Revelation iii. 14—21.

No Scripture ever wears out. The epistle to the church of Laodicea is not an old letter which may be put into the waste basket and be forgotten; upon its page still glow the words, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This Scripture was not meant to instruct the Laodiceans only, it has a wider aim. The actual church of Laodicea has passed away, but other Laodiceas still exist—indeed, they are sadly multiplied in our day, and it has ever been the tendency of human nature, however inflamed with the love of God, gradually to chill into lukewarmness. The letter to the Laodiceans is above all others the epistle for the present times.

I should judge that the church at Laodicea was once in a very fervent and healthy condition. Paul wrote a letter to it which did not claim inspiration, and therefore its loss does not render the Scriptures incomplete, for Paul may have written scores of other letters besides. Paul also mentions the church at Laodicea in his letter to the church at Colosse; he was, therefore, well acquainted with it, and as he does not utter a word of censure with regard to it, we may infer that the

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church was at that time in a sound state. In process of time it degenerated; and cooling down from its former ardour it became careless, lax, and indifferent. Perhaps its best men were dead, perhaps its wealth seduced it into worldliness, possibly its freedom from persecution engendered carnal ease, or neglect of prayer made it gradually backslide; but in any case it declined till it was neither cold nor hot. Lest we should ever get into such a state, and lest we should be in that state now, I pray that my discourse may come with power to the hearts of all present, but especially to the consciences of the members of my own church. May God grant that it may tend to the arousing of us all.

I. My first point will be THE STATE INTO WHICH CHURCHES ARE VERY APT TO FALL. *A church may fall into a condition far other than that for which it has a repute.* It may be famous for zeal and yet be lethargic. The address of our Lord begins, "I know thy works," as much as to say, "Nobody else knows you. Men think better of you than you deserve. You do not know yourselves, you think your works to be excellent, but I know them to be very different." Jesus views with searching eyes all the works of his church. The public can only read reports, but Jesus sees for himself. He knows what is done, and how it is done, and why it is done. He judges a church not merely by her external activities, but by her internal pieties; he searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men. He is not deceived by glitter, he tests all things, and values only that gold which will endure the fire. Our opinion of ourselves and Christ's opinion of us may be very different, and it is a very sad thing when it is so. It will be melancholy indeed if we stand out as a church notable for earnestness and distinguished for success, and yet are not really fervent in spirit, or eager in soul-winning. A lack of vital energy where there seems to be most strength put forth, a lack of real love to Jesus where apparently there is the greatest devotedness to him, are sad signs of fearful degeneracy. Churches are very apt to put the best goods into the window, very apt to make a fair show in the flesh, and, like men of the world, they try to make a fine figure upon a very slender estate. Great reputations have often but slender foundations, and lovers of the truth lament that it should be so. Not only is it true of churches, but of every one of us as individuals, that often our reputation is in advance of our deserts: Men often live on their former credit, and trade upon their past characters, having still a name to live, though they are indeed dead. To be slandered is a dire affliction, but it is, upon the whole, a less evil than to be thought better than we are; in the one case we have a promise to comfort us, in the second we are in danger of self-conceit. I speak as unto wise men, judge ye how far this may apply to us.

The condition described in our text is, secondly, *one of mournful indifference and carelessness.* They were not cold, but they were not hot; they were not infidels, yet they were not earnest believers; they did not oppose the gospel, neither did they defend it; they were not working mischief, neither were they doing any great good; they were not disreputable in moral character, but they were not distinguished for holiness; they were not irreligious, but they were not enthusiastic in piety nor eminent for zeal: they were what the world calls "Moderates."

they were of the Broad-church school, they were neither bigots nor Puritans, they were prudent and avoided fanaticism, respectable and averse to excitement. Good things were maintained among them, but they did not make too much of them; they had prayer-meetings, but there were few present, for they liked quiet evenings at home: when more attended the meetings they were still very dull, for they did their praying very deliberately and were afraid of being too excited. They were content to have all things done decently and in order, but vigour and zeal they considered to be vulgar. Such churches have schools, Bible-classes, preaching rooms, and all sorts of agencies; but they might as well be without them, for no energy is displayed and no good comes of them. They have deacons and elders who are excellent pillars of the church, if the chief quality of pillars be to stand still, and exhibit no motion or emotion. They have ministers who may be the angels of the churches, but if so they have their wings closely clipped, for they do not fly very far in preaching the everlasting gospel, and they certainly are not flames of fire: they may be shining lights of eloquence, but they certainly are not burning lights of grace, setting men's hearts on fire. In such communities everything is done in a half-hearted, listless, dead-and-alive way, as if it did not matter much whether it was done or not. It makes one's flesh creep to see how sluggishly they move: I long for a knife to cut their red tape to pieces, and for a whip to lay about their shoulders to make them bestir themselves. Things are respectably done, the rich families are not offended, the sceptical party is conciliated, and the good people are not quite alienated: things are made pleasant all round. The right things are done, but as to doing them with all your might, and soul, and strength, a Laodicean church has no notion of what that means. They are not so cold as to abandon their work, or to give up their meetings for prayer, or to reject the gospel; if they did so, then they could be convinced of their error and brought to repentance; but on the other hand they are neither hot for the truth, nor hot for conversions, nor hot for holiness, they are not fiery enough to burn the stubble of sin, nor zealous enough to make Satan angry, nor fervent enough to make a living sacrifice of themselves upon the altar of their God. They are "neither cold nor hot."

This is a horrible state, because it is one which in a church wearing a good repute renders that reputation a lie. When other churches are saying, "See how they prosper! see what they do for God!" Jesus sees that the church is doing his work in a slovenly, make-believe manner, and he considers justly that it is deceiving its friends. If the world recognises such a people as being very distinctly an old-fashioned puritanic church, and yet there is unholy living among them, and careless walking, and a deficiency of real piety, prayer, liberality, and zeal, then the world itself is being deceived, and that too in the worst way, because it is led to judge falsely concerning Christianity, for it lays all these faults upon the back of religion, and cries out, "It is all a farce! The thing is a mere pretence! Christians are all hypocrites!" I fear there are churches of this sort. God grant we may not be numbered with them!

In this state of the church there is much self-glorification, for

Lazarus said, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." The members say, "Everything goes on well, what more do we want? All is right with us." This makes such a condition very useless, because reproofs and rebukes fall without power, where the party rebuked can reply, "We do not deserve your censures, such warnings are not meant for us." If you stand up in the pulpit and talk to sleepy churches, as I pretty frequently do, and speak very plainly, they often have the honesty to say, "There is a good deal of truth in what the man has said;" but if I speak to another church, which really is half asleep, but which thinks itself to be quite a model of diligence, then the rebuke glides off like oil down a slab of marble, and no result comes of it. Men are less likely to repent when they are in the middle passage between hot and cold, than if they were in the worst extremes of sin. If they were like Saul of Tarsus, enemies of God, they might be converted; but if, like Gamaliel, they are neither opposed nor favouring, they will probably remain as they are till they die. The gospel converts a sincerely superstitious Luther, but Erasmus, with his pliant spirit, flippant, and full of levity, remains unmoved. There is more hope of warning the cold than the lukewarm.

When churches get into the condition of half-hearted faith, tolerating the gospel, but having a sweet tooth for error, they do far more mischief to their age than downright heretics.

It is harder a great deal to work for Jesus with a church which is lukewarm than it would be to begin without a church. Give me a dozen earnest spirits and put me down anywhere in London, and by God's good help we will soon cause the wilderness and the solitary place to rejoice; but give me the whole lot of you, half-hearted, undecided, and unconcerned, what can I do? You will only be a drag upon a man's zeal and earnestness. Five thousand members of a church all lukewarm will be five thousand impediments, but a dozen earnest, passionate spirits, determined that Christ shall be glorified and souls won, must be more than conquerors; in their very weakness and fewness will reside capacities for being the more largely blessed of God. Better nothing than lukewarmness.

Alas, this state of lukewarmness is so congenial with human nature that it is hard to fetch men from it. Cold makes us shiver, and great heat causes us pain, but a tepid bath is comfort itself. Such a temperature suits human nature. The world is always at peace with a lukewarm church, and such a church is always pleased with itself. Not too worldly,—no! We have our limits! There are certain amusements which of course a Christian must give up, but we will go quite up to the line, for why are we to be miserable? We are not to be so greedy as to be called miserly, but we will give as little as we can to the cause. We will not be altogether absent from the house of God, but we will go as seldom as we can. We will not altogether forsake the poor people to whom we belong, but we will also go to the world's church, so as to get admission into better society, and find fashionable friends for our children. How much of this there is abroad! Compromise is the order of the day. Thousands try to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, they are for God and Mammon, Christ and Belial, truth and error, and so are "neither hot nor cold." Do I speak somewhat

strongly? Not so strongly as my Master, for he says, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." He is nauseated with such conduct, it sickens him, and he will not endure it. In an earnest, honest, fervent heart nausea is created when we fall in with men who dare not give up their profession, and yet will not live up to it; who cannot altogether forsake the work of God, but yet do it in a slaggard's manner, trifling with that which ought to be done in the best style for so good a Lord and so gracious a Saviour. Many a church has fallen into a condition of indifference, and when it does so it generally becomes the haunt of worldly professors, a refuge for people who want an easy religion, which enables them to enjoy the pleasures of sin and the honours of piety at the same time; where things are free and easy, where you are not expected to do much, or give much, or pray much, or to be very religious; where the minister is not so precise as the old school divines; a more liberal people, of broad views, free-thinking and free-acting, where there is full tolerance for sin, and no demand for vital godliness. Such churches applaud cleverness in a preacher; as for his doctrine, that is of small consequence, and his love to Christ and zeal for souls are very secondary. He is a clever fellow, and can speak well, and that suffices. This style of thing is all too common, yet we are expected to hold our tongue, for the people are very respectable. The Lord grant that we may be kept clear of such respectability!

We have already said that *this condition of indifference is attended with perfect self-complacency*. The people who ought to be mourning are rejoicing, and where they should hang out signals of distress they are flaunting the banners of triumph. "We are rich, we are adding to our numbers, enlarging our schools, and growing on all sides; we have need of nothing. What can a church require that we have not in abundance?" Yet their spiritual needs are terrible. This is a sad state for a church to be in. Spiritually poor and proud. A church crying out to God because it feels itself in a backsliding state; a church mourning its deficiency, a church pining and panting to do more for Christ, a church burning with zeal for God, and therefore quite discontented with what it has been able to do; this is the church which God will bless: but that which writes itself down as a model for others, is very probably grossly mistaken and is in a sad plight. This church, which was so rich in its own esteem, was utterly bankrupt in the sight of the Lord. It had no real joy in the Lord, it had mistaken its joy in itself for that. It had no real beauty of holiness upon it, it had mistaken its formal worship and fine building and harmonious singing for that. It had no deep understanding of the truth and no wealth of vital godliness, it had mistaken carnal wisdom and outward profession for those precious things. It was poor in secret prayer, which is the strength of any church, it was destitute of communion with Christ, which is the very life blood of religion; but it had the outward semblance of these blessings, and walked in a vain show. There are churches which are poor as Lazarus as to true religion, and yet are clothed in scarlet and fare sumptuously every day upon the mere form of godliness. Spiritual leanness exists side by side with vain-glory. Contentment as to

worldly goods makes men rich, but contentment with our spiritual condition is the index of poverty.

Once more, this church of Laodicea had fallen into *a condition which had chased away its Lord*. The text tells us that Jesus said, "I stand at the door and knock." That is not the position which our Lord occupies in reference to a truly flourishing church. If we are walking aright with him, he is in the midst of the church, dwelling there, and revealing himself to his people. His presence makes our worship to be full of spirituality and life; he meets his servants at the table, and there spreads them a feast upon his body and his blood; it is he who puts power and energy into all our church-action, and causes the word to sound out from our midst. True saints abide in Jesus and he in them. Oh, brethren, when the Lord is in a church, it is a happy church, a holy church, a mighty church, and a triumphant church; but we may grieve him till he will say, "I will go and return to my place, until they acknowledge their offence and seek my face." Oh, you that know my Lord, and have power with him, entreat him not to go away from us. He can see much about us as a people which grieves his Holy Spirit, much about any one of us to provoke him to anger. Hold him, I pray you, and do not let him go, or if he be gone, bring him again to his mother's house, into the chamber of her that bare him, where, with holy violence, we will detain him and say, "Abide with us, for thou art life and joy, and all in all to us as a church. Ichabod is written across our house if thou be gone, for thy presence is our glory and thy absence will be our shame." Churches may become like the temple when the glory of the Lord had left the holy place because the image of jealousy was set up and the house was defiled. What a solemn warning is that which is contained in Jeremiah vii. 12—15:—"But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore I will do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim."

II. Now let us consider, secondly, *THE DANGER OF SUCH A STATE*.

The great danger is, first, *to be rejected of Christ*. He puts it, "I will spue thee out of my mouth,"—as disgusting him, and causing him nausea. Then the church must first be in his mouth, or else it could not be spued from it. What does this mean? Churches are in Christ's mouth in several ways, they are used by him as his testimony to the world, he speaks to the world through their lives and ministries. He does as good as say, "O sinners, if ye would see what my religion can do, see here a godly people banded together in my fear and love, walking in peace and holiness." He speaks powerfully by them, and makes the world see and know that there is a true power in the gospel of the grace of God. But when the church becomes neither cold nor hot he does not speak by her, she is no witness for him. When God is with a church the minister's words come out of Christ's mouth. "Out

Of his mouth went a two-edged sword," says John in the Revelation, and that "two-edged sword" is the gospel which we preach. When God is with a people they speak with divine power to the world, but if we grow lukewarm Christ says, "Their teachers shall not profit, for I have not sent them, neither am I with them. Their word shall be as water spilt on the ground, or as the whistling of the wind." This is a dreadful thing. Better far for me to die than to be spued out of Christ's mouth.

Then he also ceases to plead for such a church. Christ's special intercession is not for all men, for he says of his people, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." I do not think Christ ever prays for the church of Rome—what would he pray for, but her total overthrow? Other churches are nearing the same fate; they are not clear in his truth or honest in obedience to his word: they follow their own devices, they are lukewarm. But there are churches for which he is pleading, for he has said, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Mighty are his pleadings for those he really loves, and countless are the blessings which come in consequence. It will be an evil day when he casts a church out of that interceding mouth, and leaves her unrepresented before the throne because she is none of his. Do you not tremble at such a prospect? Will you not ask for grace to return to your first love? I know that the Lord Jesus will never leave off praying for his own elect, but for churches as corporate bodies he may cease to pray, because they become anti-Christian, or are mere human gatherings, but not elect assemblies, such as the church of God ought to be. Now this is the danger of any church if it declines from its first ardour and becomes lukewarm. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

What is the other danger? This first comprehends all, but another evil is hinted at,—such a church will be *left to its fallen condition*, to become wretched,—that is to say, miserable, unhappy, divided, without the presence of God, and so without delight in the ways of God, lifeless, spiritless, dreary, desolate, full of schisms, devoid of grace, and I know not what beside, that may come under the term "wretched." Then the next word is "miserable," which might better be rendered "pitiable." Churches which once were a glory shall become a shame. Whereas men said, "The Lord has done great things for them," they shall now say, "see how low they have fallen! What a change has come over the place! What emptiness and wretchedness! What a blessing rested there for so many years, but what a contrast now!" Pity will take the place of congratulation, and scorn will follow upon admiration. Then it will be "poor" in membership, poor in effort, poor in prayer, poor in gifts and graces, poor in everything. Perhaps some rich people will be left to keep up the semblance of prosperity, but all will be empty, vain, void, Christless, lifeless. Philosophy will fill the pulpit with chaff, the church will be a mass of worldliness, the congregation an assembly of vanity. Next, they will become blind, they will

not see themselves as they are, they will have no eye upon the neighbourhood to do it good, no eye to the coming of Christ, no eye for his glory. They will say "We see," and yet be blind as bats. Ultimately they will become "naked," their shame will be seen by all, they will be a proverb in everybody's mouth. "Call that a church!" says one. "Is that a church of Jesus Christ?" cries a second. Those dogs that dared not open their mouths against Israel when the Lord was there will begin to howl when he is gone, and everywhere will the sound be heard, "How are the mighty fallen, how are the weapons of war broken."

In such a case as that the church will *fail of overcoming*, for it is "to him that overcometh" that a seat upon Christ's throne is promised; but that church will come short of victory. It shall be written concerning it even as of the children of Ephraim, that being armed and carrying bows they turned their backs in the day of battle. "Ye did run well," says Paul to the Galatians, "what did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" Such a church had a grand opportunity, but it was not equal to the occasion, its members were born for a great work, but inasmuch as they were unfaithful, God put them aside and used other means. He raised up in their midst a flaming testimony for the gospel, and the light thereof was cast athwart the ocean, and gladdened the nations, but the people were not worthy of it, or true to it, and therefore he took the candlestick out of its place, and left them in darkness. May God prevent such an evil from coming upon us; but such is the danger to all churches if they degenerate into listless indifference.

III. Thirdly, I have to speak of THE REMEDIES WHICH THE LORD EMPLOYS. I do earnestly pray that what I say may come home to all here, especially to every one of the members of this church, for it has come very much home to me, and caused great searching of heart in my own soul, and yet I do not think I am the least zealous among you. I beseech you to judge yourselves, that you be not judged. Do not ask me if I mean anything personal. I am personal in the most emphatic sense. I speak of *you* and to *you* in the plainest way. Some of you show plain symptoms of being lukewarm, and God forbid that I should flatter you, or be unfaithful to you. I am aiming at personality, and I earnestly want each beloved brother and sister here to take home each affectionate rebuke. And you who come from other churches, whether in America or elsewhere, you want arousing quite as much as we do, your churches are not better than ours, some of them are not so good, and I speak to you also, for you need to be stirred up to nobler things.

Note, then, the first remedy. Jesus gives a *clear discovery* as to the church's true state. He says to it—"Thou art lukewarm, thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." I rejoice to see people willing to know the truth, but most men do not wish to know it, and this is an ill sign. When a man tells you that he has not looked at his ledger, or day-book, or held a stock-taking for this twelvemonths, you know whereabouts he is, and you say to your manager, "Have you an account with him? Then keep it as close as you can." When a man dares not know the worst about his case, it is certainly a bad one, but he that is right before God is thankful to

be told what he is and where he is. Now, some of you know the faults of other people, and in watching this church you have observed weak points in many places,—have you wept over them? Have you prayed over them? If not, you have not watched as you should do for the good of your brethren and sisters, and, perhaps, have allowed evils to grow which ought to have been rooted up: you have been silent when you should have kindly and earnestly spoken to the offenders, or made your own example a warning to them. Do not judge your brother, but judge yourself: if you have any severity, use it on your own conduct and heart. We must pray the Lord to use this remedy, and make us know just where we are. We shall never get right as long as we are confident that we are so already. Self-complacency is the death of repentance.

Our Lord's next remedy is *gracious counsel*. He says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire." Does not that strike you as being very like the passage in Isaiah, "Come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price"? It is so, and it teaches us that one remedy for lukewarmness is to begin again just as we began at first. We were at a high temperature at our first conversion. What joy, what peace, what delight, what comfort, what enthusiasm we had when first we knew the Lord! We bought gold of him then for nothing, let us go and buy again at the same price.

If religion has not been genuine with us till now, or if we have been adding to it great lumps of shining stuff which we thought was gold and was not, let us now go to the heavenly mint and buy gold tried in the fire, that we may be really rich. Come, let us begin again, each one of us. Inasmuch as we may have thought we were clothed and yet we were naked, let us hasten to him again, and at his own price, which is no price, procure the robe which he has wrought of his own righteousness, and that goodly raiment of his Spirit, which will clothe us with the beauty of the Lord. If, moreover, we have come to be rather dim in the eye, and no longer look up to God and see his face, and have no bright vision of the glory to be revealed, and cannot look on sinners with weeping eyes, as we once did, let us go to Jesus for the eye-salve, just as we went when we were stone blind at first, and the Lord will open our eyes again, and we shall behold him in clear vision as in days gone by. The word from Jesus is, "Come near to me, I pray you, my brethren. If you have wandered from me, return; if you have been cold to me I am not cold to you, my heart is the same to you as ever, come back to me, my brethren. Confess your evil deeds, receive my forgiveness, and henceforth let your hearts burn towards me, for I love you still and will supply all your needs." That is good counsel, let us take it.

Now comes a third remedy, sharp and cutting, but sent in love, namely, *rebukes and chastenings*. Christ will have his favoured church walk with great care, and if she will not follow him fully by being shown wherein she has erred, and will not repent when kindly counselled, he then betakes himself to some sharper means. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." The word here used for "love" is a very choice one; it is one which signifies an intense personal affection.

Now, there are some churches which Christ loves very specially, favouring them above others, doing more for them than for others, and giving them more prosperity; they are the darlings of his heart, his Benjamins. Now, it is a very solemn thing to be dearly loved by God. It is a privilege to be coveted, but mark you, the man who is so honoured occupies a position of great delicacy. The Lord thy God is a jealous God, and he is most jealous where he shows most love. The Lord lets some men escape scot free for awhile after doing many evil things, but if they had been his own elect he would have visited them with stripes long before. He is very jealous of those whom he has chosen to lean upon his bosom and to be his familiar friends. Your servant may do many things which could not be thought of by your child or your wife; and so is it with many who profess to be servants of God—they live a very lax life, and they do not seem to be chastened for it, but if they were the Lord's own peculiarly beloved ones he would not endure such conduct from them. Now mark this, if the Lord exalts a church, and gives it a special blessing, he expects more of it, more care of his honour, and more zeal for his glory than he does of any other church; and when he does not find it, what will happen? Why, because of his very love he will rebuke it with hard sermons, sharp words, and sore smittings of conscience. If these do not arouse it he will take down the rod and deal out chastenings. Do you know how the Lord chastens churches? Paul says, "For this cause some are sickly among you, and many sleep." Bodily sickness is often sent in discipline upon churches, and losses, and crosses, and troubles are sent among the members, and sometimes leanness in the pulpit, breakings out of heresy and divisions in the pew, and lack of success in all church work. All these are smittings with the rod. It is very sad, but sometimes that rod does not fall on that part of the church which does the wrong. Sometimes God may take the best in the church, and chasten them for the wrong of others. You say, "How can that be right?" Why, because they are the kind of people who will be most benefited by it. If a vine wants the knife, it is not the branch that bears very little fruit which is trimmed, but the branch which bears much fruit is purged because it is worth purging. In their case the chastening is a blessing and a token of love. Sorrow is often brought upon Christians by the sins of their fellow-members, and many an aching heart there is in this world that I know of, of brethren and sisters who love the Lord and want to see souls converted, but they can only sigh and cry because nothing is done. Perhaps they have a minister who does not believe the gospel, and they have fellow-members who do not care whether the minister believes it or not, they are all asleep together except those few zealous souls who besiege the throne of grace day and night, and they are the ones who bear the burden of the lukewarm church. Oh, if the chastening comes here, whoever bears it, may the whole body be the better for it, and may we never rest till the church begins to glow with the sacred fire of God, and boil with enthusiastic desire for his glory.

The last remedy, however, is the best of all to my mind. I love it best and desire to make it my food when it is not my medicine. The best remedy for backsliding churches, is *more communion with Christ*.

Behold," saith he, "I stand at the door and knock." I have known this text preached upon to sinners numbers of times as though Christ knocked at their door and they had to open it, and so on. The preacher has never managed to keep to free grace for this reason, that the text was not meant to be so used; and if men will ride a text the wrong way, it will not go. This text belongs to the church of God, not to the unconverted. It is addressed to the Laodicean church. There is Christ outside the church, driven there by her unkindness, but he has not gone far away, he loves his church too much to leave her altogether, he longs to come back, and therefore he waits at the doorpost. He knows that the church will never be restored till he comes back, and he desires to bless her, and so he stands waiting, knocking and knocking, again and again; he does not merely knock once, but he stands knocking by earnest sermons, by providences, by impressions upon the conscience, by the quickenings of his Holy Spirit; and while he knocks he speaks, he uses all means to awaken his church. Most condescendingly and graciously does he do this, for having threatened to spue her out of his mouth, he might have said, "I will get me gone; and I will never come back again to thee," that would have been natural and just; but how gracious he is when, having expressed his disgust he says, "Disgusted as I am with your condition, I do not wish to leave you; I have taken my presence from you, but I love you, and therefore I knock at your door, and wish to be received into your heart. I will not force myself upon you, I want you voluntarily to open the door to me." Christ's presence in a church is always a very tender thing. He never is there against the will of the church, it cannot be, for he lives in his people's wills and hearts, and "worketh in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure." He does not break bolt and bar and come in as he often does into a sinner's heart, carrying the soul by storm, because the man is dead in sin, and Christ must do that all, or the sinner will perish; but he is here speaking to living men and women, who ought also to be loving men and women, and he says, "I wish to be among you, open the door to me." We ought to open the door at once, and say, "Come in, good Lord, we grieve to think we should ever have put thee outside that door at all."

And then see what promises he gives. He says he will come and sup with us. Now, in the East, the supper was the best meal of the day, it was the same as our dinner; so that we may say that Christ will come and dine with us. He will give us a rich feast, for he himself is the daintiest and most plenteous of all feasts for perishing souls. He will come and sup with us, that is, we shall be the host and entertain him; but then he adds, "and he with me," that is, he will be the host and entertain us. So we will change places; we will be host and guest by turns. We will give him of our best, but poor are we that, too poor for him, and yet he will partake of it. Then he shall be host, and we will be guest, and oh, how we will feast on what he gives! Christ comes, and brings the supper with him, and all we have to do is to find the room. The Master says to us, "Where is the guest chamber?" and then he makes ready and spreads his royal table. Now, if these be the terms on which we are to have a feast together, we will most willingly fling open the doors of our hearts and say,

"Come in, good Lord." He says to you, "Children, have you any meat?" and if you are obliged to say "No, Lord," he will come in unto you none the less readily, for there are the fish, the net is ready to break, it is so full, and here are more upon the coals ready. I warrant you, if we sup with him, we shall be lukewarm no longer. The men who live where Jesus is soon feel their hearts burning. It is said of a piece of scented clay by the old Persian moralist that the clay was taken up and questioned. "How camest thou to smell so sweetly, being nothing but common clay?" and it replied, "I laid for many a year in the sweet society of a rose, until at last I drank in its perfume;" and we may say to every warm-hearted Christian, "How camest thou so warm?" and his answer will be, "My heart bubbleth up with a good matter, for I speak of the things which I have made touching the King. I have been with Jesus, and I have learned of him."

Now, brethren and sisters, what can I say to move you to take this last medicine? I can only say, take it, not only because of the good it will do you, but because of the sweetness of it. I have heard say of some persons that they were pledged not to take wine except as a medicine, but then they were very pleased when they were ill: and so if this be the medicine, "I will come and sup with him, and he with me," we may willingly confess our need of so delicious a remedy. Need I press it on you? May I not rather urge each brother as soon as he gets home to-day to see whether he cannot enter into fellowship with Jesus? and may the Spirit of God help him!

This is my closing word, there is something for us to do in this matter. We must examine ourselves, and we must confess the fault if we have declined in grace. And then we must not talk about setting the church right, we must pray for grace each one for himself, for the text does not say, "If the church will open the door," but "If *any man* hear my voice and open the door." It must be done by individuals: the church will only get right by each man getting right. Oh, that we might get back into an earnest zeal for our Lord's love and service, and we shall only do so by listening to his rebukes, and then falling into his arms, clasping him once again, and saying, "My Lord and my God." That healed Thomas, did it not? Putting his fingers into the print of the nails, putting his hand into the side, that cured him. Poor, unbelieving, staggering Thomas only had to do that and he became one of the strongest of believers, and said, "My Lord and my God." You will love your Lord till your soul is as coals of juniper if you will daily commune with him. Come close to him, and once getting close to him, never go away from him any more. The Lord bless you, dear brethren, the Lord bless you in this thing.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation iii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—184, 787, 992.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 2ND, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."—Hebrews xiii. 20, 21.

WHAT we ask others to do we should be prepared to do ourselves. Precept fails unless it be followed up by example. The apostle had exhorted the Hebrew believers to pray for him in the words, "Pray for us;" and then, as if to show that he did not ask of them what he was not himself willing to give, he utters this most wonderful prayer for them. He may confidently say to his congregation, "Pray for me" who does unfeignedly from his soul pray for them. The prayer of the apostle, as you observe, is tinged with the subject upon which he had been writing. This Epistle to the Hebrews is full of distinctions between the old covenant and the new, the gist of it being to show that the former covenant was only typical of that abiding dispensation which followed it; for it had only the shadow, and not the very image of heavenly things. His subject had been the covenant, and when he prayed his garments were sweet with the myrrh and aloes and cassia among which his meditations had conducted him. According to the manner of his thoughts was the expression of his desires. He weaved into the texture of his prayer the meditations of his heart. And this is a very right method, especially when the prayer is public, for it ensures variety, it assists others to unite with us, and it tends to edification; in fact, as the bee gathers honey from many flowers, and the honey is often flavoured with wild thyme or some other special flower which abounds in the region from which it collects its sweets, so doth our soul gather dainty stores of the honey of devotion from all sources, but that upon which she longest tarries in her meditations yields a paramount savour and flavour to the expression and the spirit of her prayer. What was more natural than that a discourse upon the covenant

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should be followed by this covenant prayer: "The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will"?

The subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews is deep, for it passes on from the superficial rudiments to those underlying truths which are more mysterious and profound. It is a book for the higher classes in Christ's school; and hence this prayer is not for babes, but for men of understanding. We could not say to all the saints, "after this manner pray ye," for they would not know what they were asking; they have need to begin with something simpler, such as that sweet "Our Father, which art in heaven," which suits alike all believers. Full grown men feed on strong meat, think sublime thoughts, and offer mighty prayers. As we may admire in the prayer of the babe its simplicity, and in the prayer of the young man its vivacity, so in the prayer of one who has become a father in Christ, and feeds upon the covenant, we rejoice in its depth, compass, and sublimity. All these we find here. I invite those who would understand the deep things of God to ask the Holy Spirit's assistance while we follow the apostle in this his covenant prayer, a prayer of which the covenant is the thread, the substance, and the plea.

I. The subject of our discourse this morning, therefore, is the covenant of grace, as it is here spoken of; and I shall begin by noticing, first, THE COVENANT NAMES which the apostle uses. He calls the ever-blessed Father "*the God of peace*;" and to the Redeemer who has taken the other side of the covenant, he gives the title, "*Our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep*." Dear friends, as many of us as have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ are in Christ, and he is our Head and Representative, our Shepherd and Sponsor. On our behalf he made a covenant with the Father upon this tenor, that we having sinned, a full recompense should be made to injured justice, and the law of God should be fully honoured; the Father on his part stipulating to grant full pardon, acceptance, adoption, and eternal life to us. Now, the covenant has been kept on Christ's side. The text assures us of that, for Jesus has according to his promise shed his blood, and now the covenant stands only to be fulfilled on the side of the eternal Father, and under that aspect of the covenant the apostle calls the Father "*the God of peace*." What a precious name! Under the covenant of works he is the God of vengeance; to sinners he is the thrice Holy God, terrible out of his holy places. Even our God is a consuming fire; and yet to us, seeing that the covenant has been fulfilled on our side by our great Head and Representative, he is only "*the God of peace*." All is peace between you and God, Christian; there is no past ground of quarrel remaining, nor any fear that a new one can arise; the everlasting covenant secures everlasting peace. He is not the God of a hollow truce, not the God of a patched-up forgetfulness of unforgiven injuries, but the God of peace in the very deepest sense; he is himself at peace, for there is a peace of God that passeth all understanding; and, moreover, by reason of his mercy his people are made to enjoy peace of conscience within themselves, for you feel that God is reconciled to you, your hearts rest in him, your sins

separated you have been removed, and perfect love has cast the fear which hath torment. While the Lord is at peace with himself, and you are made to enjoy inward peace through him, he is also at peace with you, for he loves you with a love unchangeable; he sees nothing in you but that which he delights in, and in the covenant he does not look at you as you are in yourself, but as his Head, Christ Jesus, and to the eye of God there is no sight of the universe so lovely as his own dear Son, and his people in his Son. There is beauty enough in Jesus to make him forget our deformities, and enough in Jesus to swallow up our demerits, and efficacy sufficient in the atoning blood of our great High Priest to wash away all our iniquities. As for us, our soul recognising that blood, and feeling the love of God towards us, feels now no war with God. I rebel once, for we hated him, and even now, when the old man champs the bit, and the Lord's will runs cross to our desires, we do not find it easy to bow before him and say, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because it seemed good in thy sight": but yet the new nature which comes to the front does not rebel, and all heart-contest between our soul and God is at an end. To us the Lord is in the widest and most perfect sense the God of peace. Oh, how I love that name; himself the Father, the happy God, unruffled, undisturbed; ourselves within ourselves enjoying a peace that passeth all understanding, which keeps our hearts and minds at peace with God. God at peace with us, declaring that he will never contend with us nor rebuke us, and ourselves rejoicing in him, living in his law, and living for his glory. Henceforth be it ours every troubled hour to look to the Lord under this cheering name, "God of peace," for as such the covenant reveals him.

The apostle had a view of the other great party to the covenant, and names him "Our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep." Let us first view our Redeemer in the covenant first as *Jesus* the Saviour who has brought us into the Canaan which has been given to us by a covenant of salt, even the rest which remaineth to the people of God; he is *the Lord* Jesus, in all the dignity of his nature, exalted far above all principalities and powers, to be obeyed and worshipped by all. *Our Lord* Jesus—ours because he has given himself to us, and we have accepted and received him with holy delight to be the Lord whom we cheerfully serve. *Our Lord Jesus* because he saves us; *our Lord* Jesus because by bringing us under his kingdom he rescues us; *our Lord* Jesus because we have a special relation both to his dignity and his salvation. We are not generally observant of the distinctness of our Lord's names, we do not notice the instruction which is intended by the writers who use them, nor do we exercise care enough ourselves in the employment of them; yet is there force in these titles when appropriately employed. Other names have small significance, but in the titles of Jesus there is a great deal of meaning.

Therefore, our Lord is called "that great Shepherd of the sheep." In the covenant we are the sheep, the Lord Jesus is the Shepherd. We cannot make a covenant with sheep, they have not the ability to do it; but you can make a covenant with the Shepherd for them,

and so, glory be to God, though we had gone astray like lost sheep, we belonged to Jesus, and he made a covenant on our behalf, and stood for us before the living God. Now, I have aforetime explained to you that our Lord Jesus in his death is the *good* Shepherd—the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep, and so shows his goodness; that in his rising again he is the *great* Shepherd, as we have it in the text, for his resurrection and return to glory display his greatness; but in his second advent he is the *chief* Shepherd—“when the chief Shepherd shall appear ye also shall appear with him in glory”—there he shows his superior sovereignty. Our Lord was *good* in laying down his life for the sheep, and there are other shepherds whom he makes good, who in his name feed his lambs and sheep. When he comes again the second time he will appear with others, the *chief* among them all; but in his resurrection for our justification, in connection with the covenant, he is alone, and bears the name of *the* or “*that* great Shepherd,”—that great Shepherd of whom all prophecy has spoken, in whom all the divine decrees are fulfilled, before whom all others shrink away, who stands alone, as in that covenant capacity the sole and only Shepherd of the sheep.

It is very beautiful to trace the shepherds through the Old Testament, and to see Christ as Abel, the witnessing shepherd, pouring out that blood, which crieth from the ground; as Abraham, the separating shepherd, leading out his flock into the strange country where they dwelt alone; as Isaac, the quiet shepherd, digging wells for his flock, and feeding them in peace in the midst of the enemies; as Jacob, the shepherd who is surety for the sheep, who earns them all by long toils and weariness, separates them, and walks in the midst of them to Canaan, preserving them by his own lone midnight prayers. There, too, we see our Lord as Joseph, the shepherd who is head over Egypt for the sake of Israel, of whom his dying father said, “From thence is the Shepherd, the stone of Israel.” Head over all things for his church, the King who governs all the world for the sake of his elect, the great Shepherd of the sheep, who for their sakes has all power committed unto his hands. Then follows Moses, the chosen shepherd, who led his people through the wilderness up to the Promised Land, feeding them with manna and giving them drink from the smitten rock,—what a wide theme for reflection here! And then there is David, the type of Jesus, as reigning in the covenanted inheritance over his own people, as a glorious king in the midst of them all. All these together enable us to see the varied glories of “that great Shepherd of the sheep.”

Beloved, this is a great subject, and I can only hint at it. Let us rejoice that our Shepherd is *great*, because he with his great flock will be able to preserve them all from the great dangers into which they are brought, and to perform for them the great transactions with the great God which are demanded of a Shepherd of such a flock as that which Jesus calls his own. Under the covenant, Jesus is Prophet, Priest, and King—a shepherd should be all this to his flock; and he is great in each of these offices. While we rest in the covenant of grace we should view our Lord as our Shepherd, and find solace in the fact that sheep have nothing to do with their own feeding, guidance, or

protection; they have only to follow their Shepherd unto the pastures which he prepares, and all will be well with them. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters."

II. Secondly, the apostle mentions THE COVENANT SEAL. "The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, *through the blood of the everlasting covenant*." The seal of the covenant is the blood of Jesus. In olden times when men made covenants the one with the other, they generally used some ceremony to bind the bargain, as it were. Now, under the old dispensation covenants with God were always confirmed with blood. As soon as ever blood was shed, and the victim died, the agreement made was established. Now, when our heavenly Father made a covenant with Jesus Christ on our behalf, that covenant was true and firm, "according to the sure mercies of David," but to make it stand fast there must be blood. Now, the blood ordained to seal the covenant was not the blood of bulls or of goats, but the blood of the Son of God himself, and this has made the covenant so binding that sooner may heaven and earth pass away than one tittle of it fail. God must keep his own promises. He is a free God, but he binds himself; by two immutable things wherein it is impossible for him to lie, he has bound himself to bestow covenant blessings upon the flock which the great Shepherd represented. Brethren, you and I, as honest men, are bound by our word. If we took an oath, which I trust we would not, we should certainly feel doubly bound by it; and if we had lived in the old times, and blood had been sprinkled on an agreement which we had made, we should regard the solemn sign and never dream of running back from it. Think, for a moment, how impossible it is that the Lord should ever break that covenant of grace, which he spontaneously made with his own Son, and with us in him, now that it has been sprinkled with blood from the veins of his own well-beloved Son. No; the covenant is everlasting. It stands fast for ever, because it is confirmed by blood which is none other than the blood of the Son of God.

Remember, too, that in our case that blood not only confirmed the covenant, but actually fulfilled it; because the covenant stipulation was on this wise:—Christ must suffer for our sins and honour the divine law. He had kept the law in his life, but it was necessary to the complete fulfilling of the covenant on his part that he should also be obedient to death, even the death of the cross. The shedding of his blood therefore was the carrying out of his promised obedience to its extremity. It was the actual fulfilment of Christ's side of the covenant on our behalf; so that now the whole covenant must stand firm, for that upon which it depended is finished for ever. It is not only ratified with that bloody signature, but by that blood it is actually carried out on Christ's part, and it cannot be that the eternal Father should start back from his side of the compact since our side of it has been carried out to the letter by that great Shepherd of the sheep who laid down his life for us.

By the shedding of the blood the covenant is turned into a testament. In some Bibles, the margin puts it "testament," and often in other cases we scarcely know how to translate the word, whether to say

the new testament or the new covenant ; certainly it is now a testament, for since Christ has kept his part of the covenant he wills to us what is due to him from God, and he makes over to us by his death all that comes to him as his reward, making us his heirs by a testament which is rendered valid by his death. So you may say "testament" if you please, or "covenant" if you will, only forget not that the blood has made both testament and covenant sure to all the sheep of whom Jesus is the shepherd.

Dwell with pleasure upon that word "*everlasting covenant*." Certain men in these days declare that "*everlasting*" does not mean everlasting, but indicates a period to which an end will come sooner or later ; I have no sympathy with them, and feel no inclination to renounce the everlastingness of heaven and other divine blessings in order to gratify the tastes of wicked men by denying the eternity of future punishments. Human nature leans in that direction, but the word of God does not, and following its unerring track we rejoice in the *everlasting* covenant, which will abide for ever and ever. The covenant of works is gone ; it was based on human strength, and it dissolved as a dream ; in the nature of things it could not be everlasting. Man could not keep the condition of it, and it fell to the ground. But the covenant of grace depended only upon the power and love and faithfulness of Christ, who has kept his part of the covenant, and therefore the covenant now rests only upon God, the faithful and true, whose word cannot fail.

"As well might he his being quit,
As break his promise, or forget."

"His mercy endureth for ever, and his truth throughout all generations." He has said, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good," and therefore do them good he must, for he is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. So, then, the covenant seal makes all things sure.

III. We have now to notice THE COVENANT FULFILMENT, for the Lord has commenced to fulfil it. "The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." See, then, Jesus Christ has been brought back again from the dead through the blood of the covenant. Here is the story. He was the covenant on our behalf ; he took our sin upon himself, and undertook to suffer for it. Having been crucified he yielded up his life, and from the cross he was taken to the grave, and there he lay in durance vile. Now, it was a part of the covenant on God the Father's part that he would not leave Christ's soul in Hades, nor suffer his Holy One to see corruption ; this agreement has been faithfully kept. Christ on the cross represented all of us who believe in him—we were crucified in him ; Jesus in the tomb also represented us, for we are buried with him. Whatever happened to him happened also to the flock. Now, then, what will occur to the body of Jesus ? Will God keep his covenant ? Will the worm devour that lovely frame, or will it defy corruption ? Will it come to pass that he who has descended into the earth shall never return ? Wait. It is the third morning ! The promised time has come. As

yet no worm has dared to feed upon that God-like form, yet it lies among the dead; but on the third morning the slumberer awakes like one that has been refreshed with sleep. He rises. The stone is rolled away. Angels escort him to liberty. He comes into the open air of the garden, and speaks to his disciples. Jesus who bled has left the dead, no more to die. He waits for forty days that he may let his friends see that he is really risen, but he has to rise higher yet to be fully brought back to his former honours. Will God be faithful to him and bring him back from the dead all the way he once descended? Yes, for on the Mount of Olives, when the time is come, he begins to ascend; cleaving the ambient air he mounts from amidst his worshipping disciples, till a cloud receives him. But will he rise fully to the point from which he came? Will he in his own person gain for his church a full recovery from all the ruin of the fall? Ah, see him as he enters the gates of pearl! How he is welcomed by the Father! See how he climbs aloft, and sits upon the Father's throne, for God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.

Now note by what means our Lord returned from the dead to all this glory. It was because he had presented the blood of the everlasting covenant. When the Father saw that Jesus had kept all his part of the covenant even to death, then he began to fulfil his portion of the contract by bringing back his Son from the grave to life, from shame to honour, from humiliation to glory, from death to immortality. See where he now sits expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. Now, what has been done to Jesus has been virtually done to all his people, because, you observe, the Lord "brought again from the dead," not the Lord Jesus as a private person only, but "our Lord Jesus," as "that great Shepherd of the sheep." The sheep are with the Shepherd. Shepherd of the sheep, where is thy flock? We know that thou hast loved them even to the end; but thou art gone; hast thou left them in the wilderness? It cannot be, for it is written, "Who can separate us from the love of Christ?" Hear the Shepherd say, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." "Because I live ye shall live also." "Where I am there also shall my servant be." Beloved, the sheep never are away from that great Shepherd of the sheep, they are always in his hand, and none can pluck them thence. They were on earth with him, and they are risen with him. If Jesus had remained in the grave there must all his sheep have perished; but when the Father brought him back by the blood, he brought us back by the blood, and gave us for our souls a lively hope that they shall never die, and for our bodies the expectation of resurrection.

"For though our inbred sins require
Our flesh to see the dust,
Yet as the Lord our Shepherd rose,
So all his followers must."

Jesus in heaven is only there as our representative, and his flock is following him. I wish you could get a picture in your eye of the hills of heaven rising up from these lowlands. We are feeding here awhile under his watchful eye, and yonder is a river which runs at the foot of

the celestial hills, and parts us from the heavenly pasturage. One by one our beloved ones are being called across the flood by the Good Shepherd's voice, and they cross the river pleasantly at his bidding, so that a long line of his sheep may be seen going over the stream and up the hillside to where the Shepherd stands and receives them. This line joins the upper flock to the lower, and makes them all one company. Do you not see them continually streaming up to him, and passing again under the hand of him that telleth them, to be fed by the Lamb and made to lie down for ever where wolves can never come? Thus the one flock is even now with the Shepherd, for it is all one pasture to him, though to us it seems divided by Jordan's torrent. Every one of the sheep is marked with the blood of the everlasting covenant; every one of them has been preserved, because Jesus lived; and as he was brought again from the dead by the blood, even so must they be, for so the covenant stands.

Remember, then, dear friends, that the punishment of the flock was borne by the Shepherd, that the flock died in the Shepherd, and that the flock now live because the Shepherd lives; that their life is consequently a new life; that he will bring all his sheep that as yet are not called, out of their death in sin, even as he has been brought out of his own death; that he will lead onward and upward those that are called, even as he went onward and upward from the grave to the throne; that he will preserve them all their journey through, even as he was preserved by the blood of the everlasting covenant; and that he will perfect them even as he is perfect. Even as the God of peace has glorified his Son, so also will he bring all his chosen to eternal glory with him.

IV. Fourthly, we will view THE COVENANT BLESSING. What is one of the greatest of all the covenant blessings? The writer of this epistle here pleads for it. "Now," saith he, "the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, *make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight.*" Notice that one of the chief blessings of the covenant is power and will to serve God. The old covenant said, "There are the tables of stone; mind that you obey every word that is written thereon: if you do you shall live, and if you do not you shall die." Man never did obey, and consequently no one ever entered heaven or found peace by the law. The new covenant speaketh on this wise, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. I will write my law in their hearts, and on their minds will I write them. I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me." The prophets enlarge most instructively upon this new covenant. It is not a covenant of "if you will I will;" but it runs thus, "I will and you shall." As a covenant this exactly suits me. If there were something to be performed by me I could never be sure, but as it is finished I am at rest. God sets us working, and we work; but the covenant itself dependeth wholly upon that great promise, "I will not turn away from them to do them good." So that it was right of Paul to pray that God would make us meet in every good work to do his will, because of old this

was the master promise, that those for whom Jesus died should be sanctified, purified, and made meet to serve their God. Great as the prayer is, it is only asking what the covenant itself guarantees.

Taking the text word by word, I perceive that the first blessing asked for by the apostle is *meetness for the divine service*, for the Greek word is not "Make you *perfect*," but *meet*, "fit," "prepared," "able for." I have no reference to the discussion upon the doctrine of perfection in this observation. No one text would decide that controversy; I simply make the observation because it is matter of fact. The expression should be rendered, "Make you fully complete," or "fully fitted" to do his will. We ought to request earnestly that we may be qualified, adapted, and suited, to be used of God for the performance of his will. After the man once dead in sin is made alive again, the question arises, Who shall be his master? We having died in our great Shepherd, and having been brought again from the dead, to whom shall we yield ourselves? Certainly unto God alone. Our prayer is that we may be made meet to do his will. Our Shepherd did his Father's will, for he cried, "I delight to do thy will, O God," "by the which will we are sanctified," and sanctified to the doing of that will each one of us thenceforth. It is a grand desire, but it burns in every Christian heart, that now he may be meet to serve his God, may be a vessel such as God can use, an instrument fit for the divine hand; weak and feeble, but not impure, unsuitable by reason of want of native strength, but suitable through having been cleansed by the blood of the covenant. Dear brothers and sisters, ask for meetness for service; pray day and night that you may be fully fitted for every good work.

But the apostle asked for *an inward work of grace*, not merely meetness for service, but an operation felt—"Working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight." I long above everything to possess in myself the inworking of the Holy Ghost more and more clearly. There is so much superficial religion, and we are so apt to be contented with it that it becomes us to pray for deep heart-work. We need to have our affections elevated, our will subdued, our understanding enlightened, and our whole nature deeply spiritualised by the presence of the Holy Ghost. Now this is the promise of the covenant: "I will dwell in them and walk in them." Remember, God worked in Christ in the grave by quickening his body into life, and he must work in us according to the working of that mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead. Ask the Lord to do it. Do not be satisfied with a little, weak, almost imperceptible, pulse of religion, of which you can hardly judge whether it is there or not; but ask to feel the divine energies working within you, the eternal omnipotence of God, struggling and striving mightily in your spirit until sin shall be conquered, and grace shall gloriously triumph. This is a covenant blessing. Seek ye for it.

But we need *outward* as well as inward work. Working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight,—no small matter when you remember that nothing but perfect holiness can please God. Paul would have us made fit for every good work, wanted us to be many-sided men who could do every good work, just as Jesus did. He wished us to be

qualified for any station and every position. When Jesus Christ rose from the dead he was seen; there was not merely a secret quickening in him, but a visible life, he was seen of angels and of men, and here below he lived for a period of time the observed of all observers. So, dear brethren, there ought to be in us not only an inner resurrection which we feel, but such a quickening that we shall be manifestly alive to newness of life. We must know the power of our Lord's resurrection, and exhibit it in every action of our lives. May God grant us this. There is much upon this point which time does not permit me to enlarge upon. May you know it all by experience.

Observe, once more, the completeness of this covenant blessing. Just as Jesus is fully restored to the place from which he came, and has lost no dignity nor power by having shed his blood, but rather is exalted higher than ever, so God's design is to make us pure and holy as Adam was at the first, and to add to our characters a force of love which never would have been there if we had not sinned and been forgiven, an energy of intense devotion, an enthusiasm of perfect self-sacrifice, which we never could have learned if it had not been for him who loved us and gave himself for us. God means to make us the princes of the blood royal of the universe, or, if you will, the body guards of the Lord of Hosts. He desires to fashion an order of creatures who will come very near to him, and yet will feel the lowliest reverence for him. He will have them akin to himself, partakers of the divine nature, and yet the most obedient of servants; perfectly free agents, and yet bound to him by bonds which will never let them disobey in thought, or word, or deed. And this is how he is fashioning this central battalion who shall wait upon his eternal marchings for ever—he is forgiving us great sins, he is bestowing upon us great blessings, he is making us one with his dear Son; and when he has entirely freed us from the cements of our spiritual death he will call us up to where Jesus is, and we shall serve him with an adoration superior to all the rest of his creatures. Angels cannot love so much as we shall, for they have never tasted redeeming grace and dying love. This high devotion is the Lord's aim. He did not bring up the Lord Jesus from the dead that he might live a common life. He lifted him up that he might be head over all things to his church, and that all things might be under his feet; even so the destiny of Christians is mysteriously sublime: they are not lifted up from their native death to a mere morality; they are destined to be something more than philanthropists and men esteemed by their fellows, they are to exhibit to angels, and principalities, and powers, the wonderful grace of God, showing in their own persons what God can do with his creatures through the death of his Son. I do but touch like a swallow with my wing where it were delightful to dive.

IV. We conclude with THE COVENANT DOXOLOGY, "*To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*" If anything in the world can make a man praise his God it is the covenant, and the knowledge that he is in it. I will leave off preaching and ask you to think over the love of God in the covenant. It does not belong to all of you. Christ is not the Shepherd of the whole herd of men; he is only the Shepherd of the sheep, and he has not entered into any covenant for all

ankind, but for his sheep alone. The covenant is for his own people; if you believe in him it is a covenant for you, but if you reject him you can have no participation in that covenant; for you are under the covenant of works, which condemns you. But now, believer, just sit down for a moment and think over this exceeding mercy. Your God, the everlasting Father, has entered into a solemn compact with Christ on your behalf, that he will save you, keep you, and make you perfect. He has saved you; he has performed a large part of the covenant in you already, for he has placed you in the way of life and kept you to this day; and if, indeed, you are his, he will keep you to the end. The Lord is not as the foolish man who began to build and was not able to finish. He does not commence to carry out a design, and then turn from it. He will push on his work till he completes it in you. Can you really believe it? With you, a poor, feeble mortal, who will soon sleep in the grave—with you he has made an everlasting covenant! Will you not say with our text, "To whom be the glory." Like dying David you can say, "Though my house be broken, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, and he will be glorified in all things and sure." I am sure you will joyfully add, "The glory be to his name."

Our God deserves *exclusive* glory. Covenant theology glorifies God alone. There are other theologies abroad which magnify men; they give him a finger in his own salvation, and so leave him a reason for bowing up his cap and saying, "Well done I;" but covenant theology puts man aside, and makes him a debtor and a receiver. It does, if it were, plunge him into the sea of infinite grace and unmerited favour, and it makes him give up all boasting, stopping the mouth that would have boasted by filling it with floods of love, so that it cannot utter a vainglorious word. A man saved by the covenant must give all the glory to God's holy name, for to God all the glory belongs. In salvation wrought by the covenant the Lord has exclusive glory.

He also has *endless* glory. "To whom be glory for ever and ever." Have you glorified God a little, dear brethren, because of his covenant mercy? Go on glorifying him. Did you serve him well when you were young? Ah, not so well as you wish you had: then serve him better now in these riper days. Throw yourself into the glorifying of God. The task of saving yourself is not yours, Jesus has done it all. You may sing,

"A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify;"

but you will not need to add—

"A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky."

For that soul of yours is saved; "he hath saved us and called us with his holy calling," and you are fitted for the sky by the blood of the everlasting covenant, for Paul says, "Thanks be unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." All you have to do is to glorify the Lord who has saved you and set your feet upon a rock, and established your goings. Now, go at it with all your might. Are you getting grey, dear brother? With all

your experience you ought now to glorify the Lord more than ever. You will soon be up yonder in the land of the living. Do not praise your Redeemer any longer at a poor dying rate, for you have but a short time to tarry here. And, oh, when we ascend above these clouds we will magnify our covenant God! I am sure I shall not feel it too capacious enough, even in heaven, to express my gratitude for his amazing love. I do not wonder that the poet says—

"Eternity's too short
To utter half his praise."

People find fault with that expression, and say it is an exaggeration. How would you have the poets talk? Is not hyperbole allowed them? I might even plead that it is not an hyperbole, for time nor eternity can utter all the praises of the infinite Jehovah.

"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
Our great Redeemer's praise."

This shall be the sweetest note of all our music,—*the covenant* made with David's Lord, in all things ordered according to the covenant with that great Shepherd of the sheep by which *every* creature was preserved and kept, and brought into the rich pastures of glory. We will sing of covenant love in heaven. This shall be the last song on earth and the first in Paradise—"The covenant, testament sealed with blood." How I wish Christ's ministers would speak more and more of this covenant doctrine throughout England. He who understands the two covenants has found the marrow of true theology, but he who does not know the covenants knows nothing of the gospel of Christ. You would think, to hear some ministers preach, that salvation was all of works, that it was uncertain who would be saved, that it was all a matter of "ifs," "buts," and " peradventures"; and if you begin to give them "intentions," and "wills," and purposes, and decrees, and pledges, and oaths of blood, they call you Calvinistic. Why, this doctrine was true long before Calvin was born or thought of! Calvin loved it as we do, but it did not come from him. Paul had taught it long before; nay, the Holy Ghost taught it to us in the word, and therefore we hold it fast. Bringing back of this truth to the front will be a grand triumph for the church. From the mouth of this cannon the Lord will break down the Pope and all his myrmidons into a thousand shivers, but no other doctrine will do it. By God's good grace, we must live this doctrine as well as preach it, and may he that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the new and everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work according to his will. Then will he have glory through the covenant and you, both now and for ever. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—412, 1054, 3

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE THREE WITNESSES.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 9TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"There are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."—1 John v. 8.

CHRISTIANITY puts forth very lofty claims. She claims to be the true faith, and the only true one. She avows her teachings to be divine, and therefore infallible; while for her great Teacher, the Son of God, she demands divine worship, and the unreserved confidence and obedience of men. Her commands are issued to every creature, and though at present her authority is rejected by millions of mankind, she confidently looks forward to a time when truth shall obtain universal dominion, and Jesus the Lord shall take unto himself his great power and reign.

Now, to justify such high claims, the gospel ought to produce strong evidence, and it does so. It does not lack for external evidences, these are abundant, and since many learned men have spent their lives in elaborating them, there is less need for me to attempt a summary of them. In these days scarce a stone is turned over among yonder eastern ruins which does not proclaim the truth of the word of God, and the further men look into either history or nature, the more manifest is the truth of scriptural statements. The armoury of external evidences is well stored with weapons of proof. The gospel also bears within itself its own evidence, it has a self-proving power. It is so pure, so holy, so altogether above the inventive capacity of fallen man, that it must be of God. But neither with these external or internal evidences have we to do this morning, but I call your attention to the three witnesses which are spoken of in the text, three great witnesses still among us, whose evidence proves the truth of our religion, the divinity of our Lord, and the future supremacy of the faith. Our text speaks of three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood: may the Holy Ghost, who is our Interpreter, lead us into the full meaning of this very remarkable passage.

No. 1,187.

I. I shall note, first, that OUR LORD HIMSELF WAS ATTESTED BY THESE THREE WITNESSES. If you will carefully read in the twenty-ninth chapter of the Book of Exodus, or in the eighth chapter of the Book of Leviticus, you will see that when a priest was ordained (and a priest was a type of Christ) three things were always used: he was washed with water in every case, a sacrifice was brought, and his ear, his thumb, and his toe were touched with blood, and then he was anointed with oil, in token of that unction of the Spirit with which the coming High Priest of our profession would be anointed. So that every priest came by the anointing Spirit, by water, and by blood, as a matter of type, and if Jesus Christ be indeed the priest that was for to come, he will be known by these three signs.

Godly men in the olden times also well understood that there was no putting away of sin except with these three things; in proof of which we will quote David's prayer, "Purge me with hyssop"—that is, the hyssop dipped in blood—"and I shall be clean; wash me"—there is the water—"and I shall be whiter than snow;" and then, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit." Thus the blood, the water, and the Spirit were recognised of old as necessary to cleanse from guilt, and if Jesus of Nazareth be indeed able to save his people from their sins, he must come with the triple gift—the Spirit, the water, and the blood. Now it was evidently so.

Our Lord was attested by *the Spirit*. The Spirit of God bore witness to Christ in the types and prophecies, "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" and Jesus Christ answers to those prophecies as exactly as a well-made key answers to the wards of a lock. By the power of the Holy Spirit our Lord's humanity was fashioned and prepared for him, for the angel said unto Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." When our Lord in due time commenced his public ministry, the Spirit of God descended upon him like a dove, and rested upon him, and a voice was heard from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This was indeed one of the surest seals of our Lord's Messiahship, for it had been given by the Spirit of prophecy unto John as a token—"upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." The Spirit abode in our Lord without measure, throughout his whole public career, that he is described as full of the Spirit and led of the Spirit. Hence his life and ministry were full of power. How truthfully he said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind." Well said Peter, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him." Might signs and miracles were the witness of the divine Spirit to the mission of the Lord Jesus. The Spirit abode with our Lord all his life long and to crown all, after he had died and risen again, the Holy Ghost gave the fullest witness by descending in full power upon the disciple

at Pentecost. The Lord had promised to baptise his disciples with the Holy Ghost, and they tarried at Jerusalem in expectation of the gift: nor were they disappointed, for on a sudden "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Those cloven tongues of fire, and the "rushing mighty wind," were sacred tokens that he who had ascended was Lord and God. The apostles said, "We are witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." The word of the apostles, through the Holy Spirit, convinced men "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment," as the Master had foretold; and then the Spirit comforted the penitents, and they believed in the exalted Saviour and were baptised the selfsame day. The words of Jesus were abundantly fulfilled,—“When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.” Thus from our Lord's birth, throughout his life, and after his ascension, the Holy Ghost bore conspicuous witness to him.

It is also manifest that our Lord came with *water* too. I have shown you that every priest was washed with water; our Lord was not unclean, and therefore one would have thought he might dispense with this; but to "fulfil all righteousness" his first step was to be washed in Jordan by the hands of John the Baptist, coming thus to the door of his ministry by that baptism in water which indicates that by death, burial, and resurrection, he was about to save his people. As soon as that baptism had been accomplished, ay, and before that, you could see that he had come with water, for by water is signified that clean, pure, hallowed life which the outward washing was meant to typify. His first years of obscurity were years of holiness, and his after years of service were spotless. "In him was no sin." Who ever exercised a ministry so pure as his? Where else find we such immaculate holiness? He came not by the water merely as a symbol, but by that which the water meant, by unsullied purity of life. His doctrine was as pure as his example. Point me to a single syllable of all his teaching which would create, foster, or excuse sin! He was the friend of sinners, but not the apologist for their sins. His tenderness to sinners was that of a physician whose aim is to remove the disease. His whole doctrine is fitly comparable to purifying and life-giving water, and it operated upon men's hearts in that manner. In this last sense especially he came by water. It is very remarkable how John's Gospel is both the exposition and the text of John's First Epistle, for if you turn to it you find our Lord Jesus coming by water at the outset of his teaching. To Nicodemus he says a man must be "born of water and of the Spirit;" to the woman of Samaria he speaks at large of "living water;" and on the great day of the feast he cries, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." In his ministry he not only issued the invitation, but to all who believed on him he gave of the water of the fountain of life freely. Thus our Lord came by water in the sense of communicating a new, pure, and purifying life to men; for the water is the emblem of the new life which springs up within the soul of believers, a life fresh and sparkling, leaping up from the eternal fountains of the divine existence; a life which will flow on for ever, and widen and

deepen like Ezekiel's river, and increase in fulness of power and joy until it unites with the ocean of immortal bliss. Jesus came to pour forth this living flood among the sons of men. Blessed be his name!

Our Lord closed his life with washing his disciples' feet, a fit conclusion to a life which had by its example been cleansing throughout, and still remains as the grandest corrective of the corrupt examples of the world. Even after death our Lord retained the instructive symbol by giving forth from his pierced heart water as well as blood, which John evidently thought very significant; for when he wrote concerning it he said, "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." So that from the Jordan to the cross both the symbol and the substance were with our great Master, while his own personal purity, and his gift of life to others, proved his mission to be from above.

With Jesus also was *the blood*. This distinguished him from John the Baptist, who came by water, but Jesus came "not by water only, but by water and blood." We must not prefer any one of the three witnesses to another, but what a wonderful testimony to Christ was the blood! From the very first he came with blood, for John the Baptist cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Now, the lamb which takes away sin is a slaughtered lamb, a bleeding lamb; so that at the time when the baptismal waters were upon him, John saw that he must bleed for human sin. In his ministry there was often a clear testimony to his future sufferings and shedding of blood, for to the assembled crowd he said, "Except man eat my flesh and drink my blood, there is no life in him:" while to his disciples he spake of the decease which he should shortly accomplish at Jerusalem. Then at the last, taking all our sins upon his shoulders, in the agony of Gethsemane, the blood bore witness that he was indeed the Lamb of God, and on yonder tree where he

"Bore all incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare,"

disinterestedly dying for his enemies, unselfishly suffering an ignominious doom that he might redeem those who had rejected and scoffed at him, his invincible love triumphed over death itself, and endured divine wrath without repining, as none but the Son of God could have done. Now Messiah was to be cut off, but not for himself; he was to make his soul an offering for sin, he was to make his grave with the wicked, and lie in the heart of the earth. The blood of the covenant was to be shed, the paschal victim was to be slain, the Shepherd was to be smitten, the Lamb was to be led to the slaughter, and therefore only by the shedding of his blood could Jesus prove himself to be the Messiah so long foretold. However pure the life he led, had he never died he could not have been the Saviour appointed to bear the iniquity of us all. The blood was needed to complete the witness. The blood must flow with the water, the suffering with the serving. The most pious example would not have proved him to be the divine Shepherd, if he had not laid down his life for the sheep. Take away the atonement, and Jesus is no more than any other prophet; the essential point of his mission is gone. It is evident that he w

was to come was to finish transgression, and to make reconciliation for iniquity. Now, this could not be done except by an expiation, and as Jesus has made such an expiation by his own blood, we know him to be the Christ of God. His blood is the seal of his mission, the very life of his work.

I have thus shown that our Lord himself was attested by these three sacred witnesses.

II. Now, secondly, may God the Holy Spirit help me to show that THESE THREE REMAIN AS STANDING WITNESSES TO HIM TO ALL TIME.

And first, *the Holy Spirit* is witness at this hour that the religion of Jesus is the truth, and that Jesus is the Son of God. I say not that he bears such witness everywhere, for there are many that preach in the wisdom of men, and in carnal excellency of speech, and God the Holy Ghost does not work with them, because he hath chosen other instruments. I do not say that he bears witness to the truth when it is defiled by a lukewarm ministry, and a prayerless church: but I do say this, that the Spirit of God, wherever Jesus is fully preached, is the great witness to the truth of his word; for what does he do? By his divine energy he convinces men of the truth of the gospel: and these so convinced are not only persons who, through their education are likely to believe it, but men like Saul of Tarsus, who abhor the whole thing. He pours his influences upon men, and infidelity melts away like the iceberg in the Gulf Stream; he touches the indifferent and careless, and they repent, believe, and obey the Saviour. He makes proud men tremble, and wicked men quake for fear. The conversions which are wrought where Christ is truly preached are the miracles which attest the truth of the gospel. He who can make the harlot to be chaste, the drunkard to be sober, the thief to be honest, the malicious to be forgiving, the covetous to be generous, and above all the self-righteous to be humble, is indeed the Christ of God, and when the Spirit does all this and more by the gospel, he bears conclusive witness to the power of the cross.

Then, too, the Spirit goes forth among believers, and by them he bears witness to our Lord and his gospel. Great is the variety of his operations, for which cause he is called the Seven Spirits of God; but in each one he witnesses to Jesus; whether he quickens, consoles, enlightens, refreshes, sanctifies, anoints, or inflames the soul, he does it always by taking the things of Christ and revealing them to us. How mightily does he comfort the saints! Have you not been consoled by him in deep distress? Have you not endured the loss of dear ones without repining, because your heart has been sustained by the Comforter? Now, that wondrous influence which wrought peace in you through the gospel, must have confirmed you in the belief of the truth: and others who have seen your serenity under heavy trial, if they are not convinced, at least are led to inquire what strange thing is this which makes the Christian suffer without repining. The Spirit bears witness to Christ, then, when he comforts the saints.

And he does the same when he gives them guidance, enlightenment, and elevation of soul. I will, however, for a moment, dwell upon "utterance." Some reject the idea, but for all that it is true that in the self-same hour it is given to God's servants to speak in his name. Look at

the martyr times! How wondrously feeble women like Anne A. suffered and baffled all their foes! How ignorant weavers stood up before big men and doctors and confounded them! Even now, in answer to prayer the Spirit comes upon chosen men who yield themselves to his influence and bears them along with a whirlwind, making them eloquent of divine sense, speaking out of their hearts that which God gives them to deliver. Some of us know this, for we have cast ourselves upon that eternal Spirit, and thoughts have been given us, and mighty utterance also. By this also the Spirit bears witness to the truth of our faith.

I have not time to go into all the operations of the Spirit, or to say that his sustaining, his consoling influences have been especially seen in persecuting times. Men of God have been subjected to tortures which our mind finds it painful to dwell upon, yet have not been vanquished by their foes; neither nakedness, nor fire, nor sword have separated them from the love of God. Blaise was tossed in a net by a wild bull, and burned with hot plates of iron; Mary Magdalene wears out her tormentors; and Lawrence, on his gridiron, finds enough for mirth. One cries aloud amid the flames, "Non recedam a te, Domine, Jesus," and another claps his blazing hands and shouts victory. The soul quits the body. The Spirit of God in the church has preserved us amid persecutions furious and long-continued, filling the saints with dauntless courage and a serene invincibility which has both amazed and alarmed their enemies. So mightily has this patience conquered the world, that it has passed into a proverb, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

With equal power does the Spirit of God bear witness to the truth in great revivals of religion. How wondrously did the Spirit of God testify to Christ during the Reformation! Scarcely had Luther opened his mouth to proclaim the good news than straightway men received it eagerly; they sang psalms as they ploughed the field or threshed the shuttle; the precious word was in all men's mouths. They said angels carried Luther's writings all over the world: it was not so with the ever-blessed Spirit makes the truth to fly like flames of fire. It was so in Whitfield's day, and in many revivals which we have read of and some which we have seen. Sometimes men have been struck down and convulsed, and at other times, without outward violence, have been with equal power renewed in their souls. Who that has been at Edinburgh, and seen many hundreds of people rushing through the streets to one appointed meeting-place, to fall on their knees and cry for mercy all at once, could doubt but what the gospel must be true? The Spirit of God, omnipotent in the realm of spirits, and able to guide the human will without violating it, has enlightened the darkened minds and made them see that Jesus Christ is God and Saviour. Overwhelmed by the love of Jesus, they have yielded at once to his commands. A formal church, with a minister to stand up and talk officially, and a people who come and go mechanically, bear no witness to religion, but rather creates infidels; but where we see some have called "real Methodist fire," and others "the old Protestant enthusiasm," or, rather, where we see the Holy Ghost, attending marvellous conversion, deep repentance, singular illumination

angelic and general love, we have indisputable evidence of the divinity of our faith.

The next abiding witness in the church is *the water*—not the water of baptism, but the new life implanted in Christians, for that is the sense in which John's Master had used the word "water": "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Where the Spirit of God comes he creates in the man a new nature, pure, bright, fresh, vigorous, like a fountain, and the fact that this new nature does exist in multitudes of men is a standing evidence that the gospel is true, for no other religion makes men new creatures, no other religion even pretends to do it; they may propose to improve the old nature, but none of them can say, "Behold, I make all things new." This is the sole prerogative of Jesus or Lord.

The existence of the new life is matter of fact. We ourselves know many whose lives are pure and blameless; they have faults before God, but before the eyes of men they are perfect and upright, blameless and harmless. The godly lives of Christians are good evidence of the truth of the gospel. Did I hear some one object, "But many professors of Christianity are not holy"? I grant you it, but men everybody knows that they are inconsistent with the religion which they profess. If I heard of a lustful Mahomedan I should not consider him inconsistent with Mahomedanism; is he not allowed his sin? If I heard of a licentious Hindoo, I should not consider him to be dishonouring his religion, for some of its sacred rites are disgusting and unmentionable. The same may be said of all the idolatries. But everybody knows that if a man professes to be a Christian and he is guilty of a gross fault, the world rings with the scandal, because it recognises the inconsistency of his conduct with his profession. Though some may at the first breath of a slander slaver it abroad and say, "This is your religion," the world knows it is not our religion, but the want of it. Why do they themselves make such a wonder of a fallen professor? Are adulterers so very scarce that such a noise should be made when a minister is, truly or falsely, charged with the crime? The world's conscience knows that the religion of Jesus is the religion of purity, and if professed Christians fall into uncleanness the world knows that such a course of action does not arise out of the religion of Christ, but is diametrically opposite to it. The gospel is perfect, and did we wholly yield to its sway sin would be abhorred by us, and slain in us, and we should live on earth the life of the perfect ones above. Oh, may God produce in his church more and more the witness of the new life, the testimony of holiness, love, meekness, temperance, godliness, and grace: these are the gospel's logic, its syllogisms and demonstrations, which none can refute.

The third abiding witness is *the blood*. The blood of Christ is still on the earth, for when Jesus bled it fell upon the ground and was never gathered up. O earth, thou still art bespattered with the blood of the murdered Son of God, and if thou dost reject him this will curse thee. But, O humanity, thou art blessed with the drops of that precious blood, and believing in him it doth save thee. Now, does the blood really save from guilt, terror, and despair? Does it operate among

men? Let us ask our memory. Its answer is clear and full. I speak what I do know, and testify what I have seen. I have preached the blood of Jesus Christ and the love of the incarnate God, and I have seen proud, stout-hearted men shed tears in floods; the rock has wept when smitten with this wondrous rod of the cross. Men who could resist the thunders of Sinai have melted before the tender notes of Calvary. Ay, and, on the other hand, I have seen the desponding, whose soul chose strangling rather than life, look up to that dear cross, and their faces have been brightened, and a joy unspeakable has chased away despair. Miracles of consolation the blood has wrought. We have seen men at war with God, and opposed to holiness, to whom the blood has spoken; they have seen a God reconciled to them, and they have been reconciled to him themselves. We have seen them beneath the spell of the blood throw down their weapons and cry—

“I yield, by Jesu's love subdued,—
Who can resist its charms?—
And throw myself to be renewed
Into my Saviour's arms.”

The blood of Jesus, after speaking peace to the conscience, inflames the heart with fervent love, and full often leads men to high deeds of consecration, self-denial, and self-sacrifice, such as can scarce be understood till they are traced back to that amazing love which bled upon the tree. Well might the martyrs bleed for him who was crucified for them; the blood is working mightily in men to will and to do for the glory of God. Yes, brethren, the blood has such a melting, such a converting, such a subduing, such a sanctifying, such a joy-creating power to every conscience which hears its matchless voice, that it remains, with the Spirit and the water, a convincing witness to the Christ of God.

III. In the third place, let us observe that THIS TRIPLE YET UNITED WITNESS IS PECULIARLY FORCIBLE WITHIN BELIEVING HEARTS. John tells us, “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” Now, brethren, these three witnesses bear testimony in our souls abidingly. I speak not of years ago, but of last night, when you bowed your knee in prayer and prayed, and were heard. Did not the Spirit when he helped you to pray bear witness that the gospel was no lie? Was not the answer to your prayer good evidence? And that Sabbath morning, when you prayed that you might gather up your thoughts and forget the week's cares, and you did so by the Spirit's aid, did not this sacred rest of your soul prove that Christ is indeed a Saviour? Sitting here this morning as your soul has burned within you, and your Master has been near you, has not that communion, given you of the Spirit, been to you a fresh witness to Christ? The other day, when you were so sad and the Holy Spirit comforted you, when you were so rebellious, and he made you quiet, even as a weaned child, did not this confirm your faith? The other day when you were so in the dark, and he enlightened you, when you were in such dilemmas and he guided you—had you not then fresh evidence that there is a life, a power, a divinity about the gospel? These sweet feelings of yours came to you by the Spirit of God revealing Jesus to you. He did not

comfort you nor elevate you by the law, nor by the flesh, but by the love of God shed abroad in your heart, that precious love which comes streaming down from the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord. Ah, dear friends, I feel sick to death of the common talk about the healthiness of doubting and the beauty of "modern thought." This talk is only the self-praise of a set of concealed infidels treacherously lurking in God's church. There is a short way with sceptics which I commend to your use. Ask them—Do they know the Holy Ghost? Did they ever feel him in their own souls? If they say "No," we believe them; let them believe us when we declare that we do feel the operations of the Holy Ghost. There is the end of the controversy; if they are honest so are we, and we are witnesses to the divine working of the Holy Ghost in our own souls. If they never felt his power, their negative statements cannot in the least degree affect the truth of ours.

The next witness in us is *the water*, or the new and pure life. Do you feel the inner life, my brethren? I know you do—you feel it fighting, struggling, contending, sometimes winning the mastery, and at other times captive and groaning; you feel it often aspiring, desiring, hungering, thirsting, yearning, sighing; and sometimes singing, shouting, dancing, and leaping up to heaven. You are conscious that you are not what you used to be, you are conscious of a new life within your soul which you never knew till the date of your conversion, and that new life within you is the living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever. The fact that you know you are born of God forbids a doubt as to the truth by which you were begotten; the sense that you are forgiven forbids all scepticism as to the fact that Christ is come in the flesh, and that he is the Son of God, and that his gospel is the truth of God. To you all these things are clear.

Witnessing within us is also *the blood*. Beloved, this is a witness which never fails, speaking in us better things than the blood of Abel. It gives us such peace that we can sweetly live and calmly die. It gives us such access to God that sometimes when we have felt its power we have drawn as near to our Father as if we had seen him face to face. And oh, what safety the blood causes us to enjoy! We feel that we cannot perish while the crimson canopy of atonement by blood hangs over our head. What victory it gives us! making us cry, "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." These are mysterious sensations, not to be accounted for by fleshly enthusiasm, for they are strongest when we are calmest; not to be accounted for by any natural predilections to such emotions, for we are by nature as easily perturbed as others, and as apt to forget divine things. In times of trial we have looked to Jesus' flowing wounds and we have been comforted, we have found communion with Jesus to be so blessed that we would not envy Gabriel his angelhood.

Now, then, you young men, you need not read "Paley's Evidences," the evidence of the Spirit, the water, and the blood is better. You do not want to study "Butler's Analogy," though you may if you please, but such books, excellent as they are, only prove the skin and shell of our religion, and the vital matter is the kernel. If you come by simple prayer, and ask to have the blood of Jesus applied to your soul, and if the Spirit of God works mightily in your spirit so that you obtain a

new inner principle, and lead a new life as the result thereof, you will have the best evidence in the world. You will laugh at doubters, and make a fire of Colenso's objections, and "Essays and Reviews," Tyndal's challenge, and Huxley's dreams, and all that heap of worthless muck which has polluted the church, and defiled the souls of men. O heavens, that ever we should live to see a day in which ministers tell us that it is good to doubt, when poets almost deify that very scepticism of which John says that it makes God a liar, and which therefore is to be denounced as an insult to God, and the curse of the age. Go, fling your doubts away, ye doting men and dreaming women, and bow like penitents at Jesus' feet, and you will find far more than all your fancied learning can bestow. But if ye will not do this, yet know that in vain ye arraign your Maker at your bar, in vain do you re-judge his judgment, and act as if ye were the Gods of God!

Thus I have tried to show that these three witnesses testify in our souls; I beg you now to notice *their order*. These three bear witness in us thus, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; why in this order? Because in this manner they operate. The Spirit of God first enters the heart, perhaps long before the man knows that such is the case; the Spirit creates the new life, which repents and seeks the Saviour, that is the water; and that new life flies to the blood of Jesus and obtains peace. The Spirit mightily working, the new life is secretly created, and then faith in the blood is begotten, and the triple witness is complete. We have also found this to be the order of our consolation. I have said to myself, "Do I know that the Spirit of God is in me?" and I have been afraid that it is not; I have then turned to my inner life, the water, and have not always been certain concerning it, but when I have looked away to the blood, all has been clear enough! Jesus died; I throw myself once again into his arms. When I do not know whether I have the Spirit, and when I am in doubt as to whether I have the living water, I still know that I believe in the blood, and this brings perfect peace.

Having observed their order, now note *their combination*. "These three agree in one," therefore every true believer should have the witness of each one, and if each one does not witness in due time, there is cause for grave suspicion. For instance, persons have arisen who have said the Spirit of God has led them to do this and that. Of them we inquire what are your lives? Does the water bear witness? Are you pardoned? Does the blood testify for you? If these questions cannot be answered they may rave as they like about the Spirit of God, but the witness to their salvation is open to the gravest suspicion. We have known some who will say, "Look at my life, I am very different from what I was. I am a sober, honest, excellent man." Yes, but do you rest in the blood of Jesus? Practical evidence is good, but it must arise out of faith. If you do not believe in Jesus you have not the essential witness, and your case is not proved. Many also say to us, "I believe that Jesus died for me," but we must ask them concerning their lives. Are you cleansed in act? Are you an altered man? For remember, unless the water speaks with the blood, you have not the three-fold testimony. There may be some who say, "Well, we believe in Jesus, and our lives are changed": but remember, you

may say that, but is it so? If so, the Spirit of God has changed you: if you have merely excited yourself into the belief that it is so, or if you were born by your own free will, you have not the witness, because the truly saved are born not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of the Spirit of God.

The three witnesses agree in one. He who believes in pardon by the blood believes also in sanctification by the water; he who rests in Jesus Christ's blood always honours the Spirit of God; and, on the other hand, he that believes in the Holy Ghost values both the inner life and the cleansing blood. God has joined these three together, and let no man put them asunder. The old theologians spake of *baptismus fluminis*, *baptismus fluminis*, and *baptismus sanguinis*. May we know all these, and rejoice in the Spirit, the flood, and the blood.

IV. Lastly, THESE WITNESSES CERTIFY TO US THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF OUR RELIGION. Is the Spirit working through the gospel? then the gospel will win the day, because the Spirit of God is Almighty, and complete master over the realm of mind. He has the power to illuminate the intellect, to win the affections, to curb the will, and change the entire nature of man, for he worketh all things after his own pleasure, and, like the wind, he "bloweth where he listeth." When he puts forth his omnipotent energy none can stand against him. He has converted three thousand in a day, and he could as readily convert three millions, or three hundred millions. He can do this, and he will. The wind at times blows so gently as scarcely to stir the wing of a butterfly, but at another time it rushes in a tornado, sweeping all before it; do not judge from its soft breath what its full tempest would be, for nothing can stand against the wind when once it speeds forth with power. Let the Spirit of God blow across this land and it will at once drive away the miasmas of superstition, and the clouds of ignorance.

The Holy Spirit is compared to fire. What can resist the energy of fire? There may be so little of it that a cowherd may carry it in his lantern, but lo, it sets a city on a blaze. One match contains all the fire on yonder prairie; it is flung into the dry grass, and lo, the heavens themselves are scorched with the exceeding heat. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Behold, the universe was chaos once, and the Spirit brooded over it and this fair world came forth: let him in like manner incubate over this chaos of sin, and a new heaven, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, shall rise therefrom. The gospel must conquer, because the Holy Ghost who works with it is almighty.

Next, the gospel must conquer, because of the water, which I have explained to be the new life of purity. What says John? "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." It is impossible for the gospel to be vanquished so long as there remains in the world one soul that is born of God. Living and incorruptible seed abideth for ever! Those who would destroy the church only scatter her living seeds, and when Satan raises a hurricane it only bears those seeds further afield. Satan once sat down for weeks together to scheme, and he called in all the devils one by one till Pandemonium all met in one conclave, and what think you came of it all? The Papal Inquisition. They set that horrible machine to work to crush

out what they called heresy. They said they would ride up to their saddle girths in the blood of Lutherans, and they almost redeemed their promise; but their cruelty availed not, the living faith survived, and their murders and infernal cruelties did but stir the world to a groan of sympathy, which helped the progress of the gospel. They cannot destroy the gospel. Do not talk about the Pope of Rome, or the Ritualistic or the infidel party, destroying the gospel church, they can as soon annihilate the Lord himself, because the inner life of Christians is a spark struck from the eternal sun of life, and can never be extinct while God lives.

Lastly, the gospel must spread and conquer because of *the blood*. Has that power? Oh, yes, I will tell you how. God, the everlasting Father, has promised to Jesus by covenant, of which the blood is the seal, that he "shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." As surely as Christ died on the cross, he must sit on a universal throne. God cannot lie to his Son, cannot mock his wounds, or be deaf to his death-cries, and, therefore, Christ must have what his Father has promised him, and he has said, "Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." They that bow in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust; for he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet.

Brethren, the inference from all this is, if you are not on Christ's side it is ill with you, for you will be surely conquered in the battle: but, if you are on Christ's side, never speak hesitatingly or despondingly. When they bring out a new book to disprove Genesis, and another to evaporate the atonement, do not be afraid. As long as the gospel is in the world the devil will find somebody to write books against it. Take no notice of them, they cannot stand against facts. A philosopher once wrote a book to prove that there is no such thing as matter, and a certain reader believed it till he chanced to knock his head against the bedpost, and then he abandoned the theory. When a man feels the power of the Holy Spirit, or the power of the inner life, he does not care to argue; he has a homespun philosophy of facts which answers his purpose better. Though others may round upon him and say, "You are not learned," he feels that it does not need learning to prove that which is a matter of personal consciousness, any more than we need proof that sugar is sweet when we have a piece in our mouths. Do you doubt the gospel? Try it! The men who speak against the Bible as a rule have never read it; those who rail against Christ do not know him; and those who deny the efficacy of prayer have never prayed. Nothing is more convincing than fact. Get out of the realm of word-spinning and wind-bag-filling into practical Christian life, proving personally that these things are so, and you will soon be convinced by the blessed witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John v.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—335, 451, 331.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A WORD FOR THE PERSECUTED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 16TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“What if thy father answer thee roughly?”—1 Samuel xx. 10.

was not an unlikely thing that his father would answer Jonathan roughly. Saul had taken great umbrage against David, while Jonathan, his eldest son, on the contrary, loved David as his own. Jonathan could hardly think that his father really meant harm to good a man as David, and he expressed to David that opinion, then David, to be prepared for the worst, put to him this question, “What if thy father answer thee roughly?” It did so turn out. Saul rebuked his son with bitter words, and in the desperation of his anger even hurled a javelin at him to smite him; yet Jonathan did not forsake David, he clung to him with all the faithfulness of love, and until death, which was much mourned by David, he remained his fast and faithful friend. Now, this question of David to Jonathan is one which I wish to put this morning to all believers in Christ, especially to the younger ones who have lately entered into covenant with the great Son of God, and who, in the ardour of their hearts, feel that they could live and die for him. I want to put before them the supposition that they will meet with opposition from their dearest friends, that perhaps their father, brother, husband, or uncle will answer them roughly, or perhaps their mother, wife, or sister will become a persecutor to them. What will they do? What will they do under such circumstances? Will they follow the Lord through evil report? “What if thy father answer thee roughly?”

Remember that this supposition is a very likely one. There are a few Christians so favourably circumstanced that all their friends accompany them in the pilgrimage to heaven. What advances they ought to make in the sacred journey! What excellent Christians they ought to be!

They are like plants in a conservatory—they ought to grow and bring forth the loveliest flowers of divine grace. But there are not very many who are altogether in that case. The large proportion of Christians

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find themselves opposed by those of their own family, or by those with whom they labour or trade. Is it not likely to be so? Was it not so from the beginning? Is there not enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman? Did not Cain slay his brother Abel because he was accepted of the Lord? In the family of Abraham was there not an Ishmael born after the flesh, who persecuted Isaac, who was born after the Spirit? Was not Joseph hated of his brethren? Was not David persecuted by Saul, Daniel by the Persian princes, and Jeremiah by the kings of Israel? Has it not ever been so? Did not the Lord Jesus Christ himself meet with slander, cruelty, and death, and did he not tell us that we must not look for favour where he found rejection? He said plainly, "I came not to send peace upon the earth, but a sword;" and he declared that the immediate result of the preaching of the gospel would be to set the son against the father and the father against the son, so that a man's foes should be they of his own household. Did he not carefully inquire of every recruit who wished to enlist in his army, "Have you counted the cost?" Have you not admired his perfect honesty and admirable caution in dealing with men, when he bids them remember that if they follow him they must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and be content to be hated of all men for his sake? He warns us not to expect that the disciple will be above his Master, for if men have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, they will assuredly confer no sweet titles upon his household. Since our Lord has forewarned us, it is well for us to stand ready for the trial which he predicts, and to ask ourselves whether we are ready to bear oppression for Christ's sake. I press the question upon you who think of avowing yourselves believers, for most likely it will come practically home to you, and it is well when you begin to build a house to calculate whether you will be able to finish it.

There are very many of God's servants here, whose life is made bitter by the continual worry they endure from their ungodly relatives and associates. Often do they sigh for the wings of a dove to fly away and be at rest. I feel the deepest sympathy with them, and it is not only with the intention of forearming the younger ones, but with the hope of cheering and consoling those who have been long in the fiery furnace, that I shall speak this morning upon this text, "What if thy father answer thee roughly?"

I. Our first point is this, WHAT YOU MAY DO, what there is a possibility of your doing, should your friends answer you roughly. In the first confidence of your love to Christ you go and tell father of your conversion; well, what if he should ridicule it all? You run to mother, and communicate your change of heart; what if she should scoff at it? You tell a little of your heart to some friend; what if that friend should turn again and rend you? I will tell you what perhaps you will do, though I earnestly pray that you may do no such thing. You may "*by-and-by be offended*." I mean that you may leave Christ altogether, because you cannot bear his cross, and though willing enough to go to heaven with him if the way were smooth, it may be that, like Mr. Pliable, finding that there is a slough to be got through, you will turn your back upon the good country and return to the City of Destruction. Many have done so. Our Lord's parable

seed sown in stony places teaches us that many shoots which fair for harvest, perish when the sun arises with burning heat they have no root. Observation confirms this statement. If fair-weather professors of religion could have been daily hailed with general acclamation, they would, after a certain fashion, have been steadfast; but inasmuch as they have met with rebuffs and chills they never bargained for, they have cast off all religion and joined with the fashionable world. To such the earthly father is dearer than the Father who is in heaven; the brother after the flesh is dearer than the Brother who is born for adversity; and the ungodly world is more precious than the everlasting Bridegroom; and so they desert their Lord.

It may happen to you that, instead of being by-and-by offended, you continue for awhile, but *you may gradually give way, and at last altogether*. There are many among us who could bear to be beheaded at a stroke for Christ, but to be burned at a slow fire that would try us! And if that slow fire lasted not for a day or two, but for weeks, and months, and years! How then? If, after patient endurance, the cruel mockings still continue, if the hard and bitter speeches never cease—how then? Surely, unless it sustains us, the flesh will clamour to be rid of this uneasy yoke, and will look out for some by-path by which it may escape the rigours of this rough road and go back again to the world. Grace will hold on to the end, but nature at her best, with firmest resolutions, will only be tried up to a certain point, and it will surely yield.

What we may do; but may God grant that we may be preserved from such a wretched course of action, for, if we do give way because of persecution from ungodly friends, it involves tremendous guilt. To give up religion because of persecution is to prefer ourselves to be selfish enough to regard our own ease rather than his glory, to consult our own peace rather than his honour, though we have said that we love him beyond all else for redeeming us with blood. It will show that we love him not at all, but are unfaithful, false, and hypocritical. With all our fine professions, if we give up religion because of persecution it will prove that we only want our price, and, like the traitor Judas, we too will sell our Master; not for thirty pieces of silver possibly, but to escape ridicule or avoid ill-will.

It will become clear, also, that we prefer the praise of man to the praise of God. A smile from a face which is soon to die we value higher price than the love of God, or the Redeemer's approbation. A moment was more affected by the question of a silly maid giving up his allegiance to his Lord, but how dreadful to fall into that trap deliberately, and think more of a man that shall die, and of the praise of man that is but as a worm, than of the Lord our Maker and Judge, who alone is to be feared. Is not this folly, treason, and iniquity?

To forsake the Lord through persecution is to set time before us, to barter heaven for this world's pleasures, to renounce eternal life for a few hours of ease, and to involve ourselves in endless misery rather than endure a stupid jest or a senseless jibe. It comes to that. If a man has had life and death set before him, the life has been

shaded with the cross, and the death has been gilded over with transient merriment, and he has chosen the everlasting death with its glitter in preference to eternal life with its momentary trial. May God grant we may never be of so insane a mind, for if we are, we shall be numbered with those mentioned in the Revelation, of whom it is said that "the fearful," which is being interpreted the cowardly, "and the unbelieving, the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars"—for that is the class of persons with whom cowards are numbered—"shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. xxi. 8), from which death may the infinite mercy of God deliver us. Like true soldiers may we buckle on our harness and resolve that, let the battle rage as it may, through divine grace we will not desert our colours. We prefer death itself to the disgrace of forsaking a cause so true, a doctrine so pure, a Saviour so gracious, a Prince so noble, and so worthy of our most loyal service.

But if left to ourselves we may fall into what is as bad as open apostasy. When we find the father, or the wife, or the friend answering us roughly, *we may make a pitiful compromise between Christ and the world*. I warn you solemnly against this above everything else. It has the look of being the prudent and proper thing to do. "Can I not please men and please God? May I not go a little way with Christ and a little way with the world?" O soul, if you attempt this you must fail, and moreover you will have chosen the roughest road of all, for if a man serves God, and serves him thoroughly, he will meet with many comforts to balance his crosses; and if a man serves Satan thoroughly he will enjoy whatever poor comfort is to be got out of sin; but if he goes betwixt and between he will feel the discomforts of both, and the pleasures of neither. Running the gauntlet on board ship is not worse than attempting to be friends with Christ and Satan at the same time. I believe many a professing woman has given way at first to her ungodly husband, where she should have been decided, and she has embittered all the rest of her life; and many a husband, many a son, many a man of business, has been undecided in a minor matter for peace sake, and from that very moment the other side has never believed in his sincerity, and having given an inch, the world has demanded its ell, and there has been an end to all liberty henceforth. If you yield a single point of honesty or true religion, the unconverted will not believe in you as they would have done if you had been firm throughout; men respect a thoroughbred Christian, but nobody has a good word for a mongrel. Be one thing or the other, either hot or cold, or Christ will reject you, and the world too. If a thing be right, do it; if you resolve to serve the Lord, do it, offend or please; and if, on the other hand, you prefer the service of Satan, do at least be honest enough not to pretend to be on the Lord's side. Remember the challenge of Elijah, "If God be God, serve him; if Baal be God, serve him;" but do not attempt a compromise, which will end in a miserable breakdown. Mark Antony drove two lions yoked together through the streets of Rome, but no Mark Antony could ever drive the lion of the tribe of Judah and the lion of the pit in a leash together. They will never agree. Be ye warned, then, against falling into the

meanness of compromise, for compromise is nothing better than varnished rebellion against God, a mockery of his claims, and an insult to his judgment. May the grace of God keep us from this, for left to ourselves we shall fall into this snare.

I will tell you what you may do also, and I pray that the Holy Spirit may lead you to do it. *You may take up humbly, but firmly, this decided stand:—*“If my father answer me roughly he must do so, but I have another Father who is in heaven, and I shall appeal to him. If the world condemn me, I shall accept its condemnation as a confirmation of that gracious verdict of acquittal which comes from the great Judge of all, for I do remember it is written, ‘If the world hate you ye know that it hated me before it hated you:’ and ‘If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.’” Be it ours to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. May we count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all earth’s treasures. Never may a coward blush defile our cheek because we are ashamed of Jesus; far rather may we be willing to be made a gazing-stock than for a moment think of turning aside from our Beloved Lord. False or fearful may we never be; firmly and calmly, with the confidence of a love which cannot falter, let us cleave to our Lord, even though all men should forsake him:—

“Oh, learn to scorn the praise of men!
Oh, learn to lose with God;
For Jesus won the world through shame,
And beckons thee His road.”

II. The second head is WHAT THE TRIAL WILL DO FOR US IF WE ARE HELPED TO BEAR UP UNDER IT. “What if thy father answer thee roughly?” First, *it will grieve us*. It is by no means pleasant to be opposed in doing right by those who ought to help us in it. It is very painful to flesh and blood to go contrary to those we love. Moreover, those who hate Christians have a way of putting their revilings so that they are sure to make us wince. They watch our weak points, and with very wonderful skill they turn their discoveries to account; trained by the old master of all malice, they are not slow to ply their lash where we are most tender. If one thing is more provoking than another, they will be sure to say it, and say it when we are least able to bear it. It may be they are very polite people, and if so, your refined persecutors have a very dainty way of cutting to the bone, and yet smiling all the while. They can say a malicious thing so delicately that you can neither resent it nor endure it. The art of persecuting has been so long studied by the seed of the serpent that they are perfect masters of it, and know how to make the iron enter into the soul. Do not be astonished, therefore, if you are sorely vexed, neither be amazed, as though some strange thing had happened unto you. The martyrs did not suffer sham pains; the racks on which they were stretched were not beds of ease, nor were their prisons parlours of comfort. Their pains were agonies, their martyrdoms were torments. If you had sham griefs you might expect counterfeit joys; let the reality of your tribulation assure you of the reality of the coming glory.

The opposition of *your friends will try your sincerity*. If you are a hypocrite you will soon yield to opposition. "The game is not worth the candle," say you, and you will be off, and for the church's sake very likely it will be a blessing, for the wheat is all the better for being rid of the chaff, and if the wind of persecution can blow you away you are chaff. The rough answers of opponents will *try your faith*. You say you believe in Jesus: now we shall see if you do, for if you cannot bear a little trial from men and women, surely you will not be able to bear the worse trials from the devil and his angels. "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" If you cannot bear the trials of life, how will you endure the ordeals of death?

Persecution will *try your love to Jesus*. If you really love him you will cheerfully stand in the pillory of reproach with him, and when enemies have filth to hurl you will say, "Throw it upon me rather than upon him: if there is a hard thing to be said, say it about me rather than against my Lord."

"If on my face for his dear name
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
For he'll remember me."

It will try your love, I say, and so it will all your graces in their turn; and this is good for you. These virtues will not increase in strength unless they are brought into action; and if they are not tested, who is to know of what sort they are? Your valiant soldier in quiet barracks at home could fight, no doubt, but how do you know till he has passed through a campaign? He who has charged up to the cannon's mouth, he who is adorned with a sabre cut across his brow, and bears many a wound beside, which he gained in the service of his king, he is brave beyond question. Good gold must expect to be tried in the fire, and these oppositions are sent on purpose that our faith, and our love, and all our graces should be proved genuine by enduring the test.

The rough answers of those who should be our friends *will keep us awake*. I think it was Erskine who used to say, "Lord, deliver me from a sleepy devil"; and truly it is a prayer well worth praying. When everything goes on smoothly, and nobody ridicules us, we are very apt to be off our guard, but when we are stung by undeserved reproaches and insults, and when for our love we receive only anger or unkindness, we are not very likely to go to sleep. Such afflictions *drive you to your knees*. Perhaps you have read the story of Mr. Fraser, one of the ministers in Ross-shire, who had a cold, unfeeling woman for a wife; she was very cruel to him, and would never allow light or fire in his study, so that he had actually worn two holes in the plaster at the ends of his room, where his hand had touched as he paced to and fro in the dark. At a meeting of ministers who were not of his mind in divine things, one of them thought to make sport of him by remarking that he would no doubt very heartily agree with the toast of "Health to our wives." To their astonishment he answered, "Mine has been a better wife to me than any of yours has

been to you, for she has sent me to my knees seven times a day, when I would not otherwise have gone, which is more than any of you can say of yours." Personally I should greatly prefer not to have such a perpetual blister applied to me, but had the good Physician appointed me so severe a trial, I doubt not that he would have had good reason for it. Out of what men call weeds the wise man extracts a medicine, and out of these bitter trials the Lord produces a sacred tonic which braces us for a higher life of communion with himself.

Trials from the enemies of Jesus *confirm our faith*. Those who are never tried usually possess a poor, tottering faith, but trial, especially persecution, is like the rough March wind which goes howling through the forest, and while the young oaks are almost torn up by the roots at first, it loosens the soil for them, and they send out more rootlets, till they get such a firm grip that they defy the hurricane. That which shakes them at first strengthens them afterwards. The tried saint is the bold saint, and the firm saint; therefore take the rough answer joyfully, and look for good results from it. A little persecution for the church in England would be a grand thing for her. We have fallen on very velvety days, when zeal for God is rare and decision for truth scarcely to be met with. The church has made terms with the world, and goes to sleep, Satan rocking her cradle. Many a man professes to be a Christian, who is nothing better than a baptized worldling, and many a man sets up to be a minister of Christ who is a mere reader of other people's sermons, and a hireling who cares not for the sheep. The fan of persecution, if it purged the threshing floor of the church, would bestow great benefits upon her.

Rough speeches, too, will have this good effect upon genuine Christians, it will lead them to *plead for those who utter them*. I remember a good man who used to say of a certain swearing fellow who took delight to vex him with his horrid taunts and oaths, "Well, after all, I might forget to pray for him, but he reminds me of it, for he will not let me go by without a curse." If our friends were all very smooth-spoken, and concealed their enmity to Christ, we might entertain a false hope about them, and we might not pray for them; but when we see that the old nature is there, and very rampant, it drives us to intercession for them, and who can tell but what the Lord may give us their souls as our reward?

Certainly opposition has another good effect, that it *drives those subject to it into the truly separated path*; they are known to be Christians, and proclaimed as such by their revilers. I do not think it is a bad thing, young man, when you go to that warehouse that they should advertise you as a Christian by crying out "Halloa, here comes one of the Methodist sort." It is good for you to be known. If you are what you should be, you will not mind being labelled, nor being tested thereby. It will help to keep you right when temptations arise; and it will frequently deliver you from trials of a more fascinating kind; or, suppose they forsake your company because you are a Christian, it will not that be well? Those who leave you on that account are a very gainful loss. An honourable lady, now with God, when she joined this church told me how after her baptism many of her aristocratic friends had ceased to call upon her, or invite her to their

housers. I congratulated her upon it, for it rendered it all the easier for her to select her own company. Her real worth of character and kindness of spirit soon won back all who were worth having, and the rest were happily removed. Such as shun you for following the Lord are persons whom you yourself might shun. We gain nothing by the love of those who love not God.

One good effect of being persecuted at home is this, it makes you gentler abroad. If, my brother Christian, you have those at home who make you unhappy, if you are a wise man you will be the better able to have patience with outsiders. Men wondered why Socrates was so patient with his pupils, and so good-tempered, but he ascribed it to having been hardened by the opposition of others, by being schooled at home by his shrewish wife, Xanthippe. Perhaps you will have the greater patience with those who scoff, and the greater sympathy with those who are scoffed at, from having had your share in the common lot of the saints. Thus to you as to Samson, out of the eater cometh forth meat, and out of the strong cometh forth sweetness. This lion roars upon you, but the day shall come when you will find honey in it, and bless the name of the Lord.

III. My third point is, *HOW SHOULD YOU BEHAVE UNDER THE TRIAL?* May the Holy Spirit enable you to act very discreetly as well as decidedly. *Never court opposition.* God forbid we should do so. Some zealots seem bent on making religion objectionable. The cup we hold to a sinful world is in itself repugnant enough to fallen nature; there can be no wisdom in making it yet more objectionable by presenting it with a scowling face. It is as well when you have medicine to give to a child to show him a piece of sugar too: so let your kindness, and cheerfulness, and gentleness sweeten that which the world is not very likely to receive anyhow, but which it will the less resent if you present it with love, showing a desire to live peaceably with all men, and to consult the comfort of others rather than your own.

And then *endure whatever you have to endure with the greatest possible meekness.* There was a farmer whose wife was very irritated with him because of his attending a dissenting place of worship, and joining with Christian people. She often declared that she would not bear it much longer, but he was very patient, and made no harsh reply to her. One day she fetched him out of the harvest field, and said, "Now it is come to this; you will give up those people, or give me up"; and she brought out a web of cloth and said, "Now you take half of this and I'll take the other half; for I am going." He said, "No, my dear, you are welcome to it all. You have always been a very good industrious wife, take it all." Then she proposed taking a part of their household goods and settling everything for a final separation, but again he said, "Take all there is. If you will go away take everything you like, for I should not wish you to be uncomfortable; and come back again whenever you please, I shall always be glad to see you." Seeing that he talked in that way, she said, "Do you mean me to go?" "No," said he, "it is your own wish, not mine. I cannot give up my religion, but anything else I can do to make you stay and be happy, I will do." This was too much for her, she resolved to cease her opposition, and in a short time went with her husband to

of worship, and became herself a believer. This is the surest victory. Yield everything but what it would be wrong to. Never grow angry. Keep cool, and let the railing be all on e. There was a poor godly woman who used to attend the y of Mr. Robinson, of Leicester, and her husband, a very coarse nan, said to her one day in his wrath, "If you ever go to St. church again I'll cut both your legs off." He was a dreadful id equal to any violence, but on the next occasion of worship : went as aforetime. As she came home, she commended her- he care of God, expecting to be assailed. Her husband said to There have you been?" "I have been to St. Mary's church," :. With that he felled her to the ground with a terrible blow face. Rising up, she gently said, "If you strike me on the de I shall as freely forgive you as I do now." She had been a ssionate woman before conversion, and had been accustomed to r husband as good as he could send, and therefore he was struck r gentleness. "Where did you learn this patience?" said he. ly was, "By God's grace I learned it at St. Mary's." "Then y go as often as you like." Presently he went also, and the s over. There is nothing like meekness. It will conquer the st.

bearing with meekness *return good for evil*. For cruel words warmer love and increased kindness. The most renowned for a Christian to fight his antagonists with is that of over-evil with good. Evil to evil is beastlike, and no Christian indulge in it; but good for evil is Christlike, and we must : it. I think I have before told you the story of the husband s a very loose, gay, depraved, man of the world, but he had a o for many years bore with his ridicule and unkindness, pray- him day and night, though no change came over him, except grew even more bold in sin. One night, being at a drunken th a number of his boon companions, he boasted that his wife do anything he wished, she was as submissive as a lamb. ' he said, "she has gone to bed hours ago; but if I take you y house at once she will get up and entertain you and make no nt." "Not she," they said, and the matter ended in a bet, and ey went. It was in the small hours of the night, but in a utes she was up, and remarked that she was glad that she had ckens ready, and if they would wait a little she would soon have r spread for them. They waited, and ere long, at that late ie table was spread, and she took her place at it as if it was r ordinary matter, acting the part of hostess with cheerfulness. the company, touched in his better feelings, exclaimed, "Madam, it to apologise to you for intruding upon you in this way, and an hour, but I am at a loss to understand how it is you receive eerfully, for being a religious person you cannot approve of our ." Her reply was, "I and my husband were both formerly erted, but, by the grace of God, I am now a believer in the aus. I have daily prayed for my husband, and I have done all o bring him to a better mind, but as I see no change in him, I will be lost for ever; and I have made up my mind to make

him as happy as I can while he is here." They went away, and her husband said, "Do you really think I shall be unhappy for ever?" "I fear so," said she, "I would to God you would repent and seek forgiveness." That night patience accomplished her desire. He was soon bound with her on the way to heaven. Yield on no point of principle, but in everything else be willing to bear reproach, and to be despised and mocked at for Christ's sake. *In hoc signo vinces*—by the cross patiently borne thou conquerest. "This is a hard saying," says one. I know it is, but grace can make the heaviest burden light, and transform duty into delight.

Here let me also remark that to this gentle endurance there must be added by the persecuted Christian *much exactness of life*. We must be very particular when such lynx-eyes are upon us, because if they can find us trespassing they will pounce upon us at once. If it is only a little wrong, a thing which they would not have noticed in anybody else, they will magnify it and raise quite a clamour about it. "Ah, that is your religion," say they, as if we claimed to be absolutely perfect. Be watchful, therefore, walk circumspectly, do not put yourself into their hands; let them have nothing to say against you save only upon the point of your religion. Nothing baffles opponents like integrity, truthfulness, and holiness: they long to speak against you, but cannot find a fair opportunity. Take care that you daily pray for grace to keep your temper, for if you fail there they will boast of having conquered you, and will assail you again in the same way. Ask for grace to be patient, and say as little as you can, except to God. Pray much for them, for prayer is still heard, and how knowest thou, O believing woman, but thou mayst save thy unbelieving husband? Only watch on and pray on, and a blessing will come.

IV. IN DOING ALL THIS WHAT COMFORT MAY YOU EXPECT? You may have this for your comfort, that *the persecutor is in God's hands*. He cannot do more than God lets him, and if God permits him to annoy, you may cheerfully bear it. Next, remember, if you keep your conscience clear it is a great joy. Conscience is a little bird that sings more sweetly than any lark or nightingale. Rough answers outside need not trouble you while within there is the answer of a good conscience towards God. Injure your conscience and you lose that consolation; preserve it from evil and you must be happy. Remember that by patiently enduring and persevering *you will have fellowship with the grandest spirits that ever lived*. You cannot be a martyr and wear the blood-red crown in these days, but you can at least suffer as far as you are called to do: grace enabling you, you may have a share in the martyr's honours. "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Remember, too, that if you have extraordinary troubles *Jesus will be doubly near to you*. This is the greatest comfort of all, for in all your afflictions he is afflicted. You will find his presence in the ordinances to be very delightful. Those stolen waters which he gives you in secret fellowship are very choice, those morsels which you get by stealth, how sweet they are! The old covenanters said they never worshipped God with so much joy as in the glens and among the hills

Slaverhouse's dragoons were after them. The living water is freshing to the Lord's hunted harts. His bosom is very soft and for those who are rejected of all men for his sake. He has a usual way of unveiling his face to those whose faces are covered in shame because of their love to him. Oh, be content, dear friends, abide with your Lord.

Have the sweet thought also that *you are doing more good* where than if you were placed altogether among the godly. Yonder set up in mid ocean on the Eddystone rock, see how the storm rages around it, and the waters leap over it, threatening to put out the light, but shall the light complain? Standing where it is, beaten by the Atlantic rollers, and braving the full fury of the storm, it is more good than if it were set up in Hyde Park for my lords and ladies to look at. The persecuted saint occupies a place where he warns the godly, and therefore suffers. He is like an advanced guard, in the place of danger is the place of honour: only let him ask strength to bear and forbear, and he shall have glory at the last. Remember the rougher the road *the sweeter the rest*, and the greater the brighter the crown at the last. Those who have to suffer for Jesus will be those to whom he will most sweetly say, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy

brethren, if you have a little rough language to put up with, it, compared with what many of the Lord's afflicted ones have to suffer? I will tell you a little incident bearing upon that point, and what has been done. Yesterday the postman brought me, amongst many letters, a letter from Australia, which I prize more than any that have come to my hand for a long while; it has touched my heart, and when I read it you will not wonder. It is written at the desire of a man described by the gentleman who writes for him in the following words: "I have known the writer for near eight years, during which time he has been quite helpless, being paralysed; he has had one leg amputated, the sight has left his eye, he cannot move hand or feet; as he lies on his bed so must he lie and endure the annoyance of flies, and the annoyance of flies, and the annoyance of flies, and the annoyance of flies, and the annoyance of flies. So that I am sure you will be able to be the means of giving comfort to such an one, and yet he is rejoicing; and few are more apt to teach and exhort those who see him, and direct them to suitable portions of God's word for their edification." Now this poor man, who has been helpless ever since 1858, or sixteen long years, writes me thus: "Being moved by the Holy Spirit I send you these few lines to thank you for the comfort I have received by reading your sermons. In the year 1850 I came to the knowledge of the truth, and found peace through the blood of Jesus. In 1858 I met with a serious accident, so that I was unable to earn my bread, but trusting in the Lord he has led me in the right way. In 1866 it pleased him to confine me entirely to my bed. I bless his Holy Name that I can say I am bound by the love of his love, that he has upheld and comforted me through all my confinement, and enabled me to rejoice in hope of his glory; and reading of your excellent sermons, which privilege I have enjoyed for some years, having been a source of great comfort and

delight to my soul, causing me to soar on high and enjoy sweet communion, I am constrained by love to send you this acknowledgment, hoping that perhaps you may be cheered a little by it in your arduous labours; and if our heavenly Father see fit, this my testimony to his faithfulness may be blessed by him to the comfort and encouragement of some afflicted ones in your flock, as I know that *all* these things work together for good to them that love God." Think of this unselfish sufferer having a letter written to comfort me. One would have thought he needed comforting himself, but the Lord so cheers him that, instead of asking for consolation, he does not mention in his letter that he has lost his leg, or that he is paralysed, or has lost his sight. He only tells me of his joy and peace. Now, if children of God in such extremities can yet bear testimony to his faithfulness, are you going to run away because some foolish person or other sneers at you? Will you in cowardly fashion desert the standard because fools point their fingers at you? If so, are you made of the same stuff as the true saints? Have you the same backbone of divine grace as they? Assuredly not. May the Lord in his infinite mercy give you such a sound conversion that, whatever trial comes, you may still sing, "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord and glory in the God of my salvation."

If I am addressing any one who has persecuted God's saints in any way, let me say, "Mind what you are at; there are many things a man will bear, but if you meddle with his children it will stir his soul, that is a tender point with all fathers." Nothing provokes the Lord like interfering with his children. Mind what you are at. And, oh, I pray the Lord, if you have done it ignorantly, really thinking them to be wrong, and only scoffing at them because you thought them hypocrites, may he that spake out of heaven to Saul, and said, "Why persecutest thou me?" let you see that you have really been wounding Jesus himself. May he make you see that those tears which you have forced from that faithful woman, and those sleepless nights which you have caused to that earnest man, were so much of evil done unto Christ, for which he will reckon with you at the last. Turn you unto the Lord Jesus, and may the Holy Spirit grant you to repent of this your wickedness, for Jesus is willing to receive and bless even you, as he did Paul of old. Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you also shall be saved. God bless you all, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark iv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—76, 670, 667.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE TURNING POINT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 23RD, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And he arose, and came to his father."—Luke xv. 20.

THIS sentence expresses the true turning point in the prodigal's life story. Many other matters led up to it, and before he came to it there was much in him that was very hopeful; but this was the point itself, and had he never reached it he would have remained a prodigal, but would never have been the prodigal restored, and his life would have been a warning rather than an instruction to us. "He arose, and came to his father." Speaking, as I do, in extreme weakness, I have no words to spare; and while my voice holds out I shall speak straight to the point, and I pray the Lord to make every syllable practical and powerful by his Holy Spirit.

I. We shall begin by noticing that **HERE WAS ACTION**—"He arose, and came to his father." He had already been in a state of thoughtfulness; he had come to himself, but now he was to go further, and come to his father. He had considered the past, and weighed it up, and seen the hollowness of all the world's pleasures; he had seen his condition in reference to his father, and his prospects if he remained in the far-off country; he had thought upon what he ought to do, and what would be the probable result of such a course; but now he passed beyond the dreaminess of thought into matter-of-fact acting and doing. How long will it be, dear hearers, before you will do the same? We are glad to have you thoughtful; we hope that a great point is gained when you are led to consider your ways, to ponder your condition, and to look earnestly into the future, for thoughtlessness is the ruin of many a traveller to eternity, and by its means the unwary fall into the deep pit of carnal security and perish therein. But some of you have been among the "thoughtful" quite long enough; it is time you passed into a more practical stage. It is high time that you came to action; it would have been better if you had acted already; for, in the matter of reconciliation to God, first thoughts are best. When a man's life hangs

on a thread, and hell is just before him, his path is clear, and a second thought is superfluous. The first impulse to escape from danger and lay hold on Christ is that which you would be wise to follow. Some of you whom I now address have been thinking, and thinking, and thinking, till I fear that you will think yourselves into perdition. May you, by divine grace, be turned from thinking to believing, or else your thoughts will become the undying worm of your torment.

The prodigal had also passed beyond mere regret. He was deeply grieved that he had left his father's house, he lamented his lavish expenditure upon wantonness and revelling, he mourned that the son of such a father should be degraded into a swineherd in a foreign land, but he now proceeded from regret to repentance, and bestirred himself to escape from the condition over which he mourned. What is the use of regret if we continue in sin? By all means pull up the sluices of your grief if the floods will turn the wheel of action, but you may as well reserve your tears, if they mean no more than idle sentimentalism. What avails it for a man to say he repents of his misconduct if he still perseveres in it? We are glad when sinners regret their sin and mourn the condition into which sin has brought them, but if they go no further, their regrets will only prepare them for eternal remorse. Had the prodigal become inactive through despondency, or stolid through sullen grief, he must have perished, far away from his father's home, as it is to be feared many will whose sorrow for sin leads them into proud unbelief and wilful despair of God's love; but he was wise, for he shook off the drowsiness of his despondency, and, with resolute determination, "arose and came to his father." Oh, when will you sinners be wise enough to do the same? When will your thinking and your sorrowing give place to practical obedience to the gospel?

The prodigal also pressed beyond mere resolving. That is a sweet verse which says, "I will arise," but that is far better which says "And he arose." Resolves are good, like blossoms, but actions are better, for they are the fruits. We are glad to hear from you the resolution, "I will turn to God," but holy angels in heaven do not rejoice over resolutions, they reserve their music for sinners who actually repent. Many of you like the son in the parable have said, "I go," but you have not gone. You are as ready at forgetting as you are at resolving. Every earnest sermon, every death in your family, every funeral knell for a neighbour, every pricking of conscience, every touch of sickness, sets you a resolving to amend, but your promissory notes are never honoured, your repentance ends in words. Your goodness is as the dew, which at early dawn hangs each blade of grass with gems, but leaves the fields all parched and dry when the sun's burning heat is poured upon the pasture. You mock your friends, and trifles with your own souls. You have often in this house said, "Let me reach my chamber and I will fall upon my knees," but on the way you have forgotten what manner of men you were, and sin has undermined its tottering throne. Have you not dallied long enough? Have you not lied unto God sufficiently? Should you not now give up resolving and proceed to the solemn business of your souls like men of common sense? You are in a sinking vessel, and the life-boat is near, but your mere resolve to enter it will not prevent your going

down with the sinking craft ; as sure as you are a living man, you will drown unless you take the actual leap for life.

"He arose and came to his father." Now, observe that *this action of the prodigal was immediate*, and without further parley. He did not go back to the citizen of that country and say, "Will you raise my wages? If not, I must leave." Had he parleyed he had been lost ; but he gave his old master no notice, he cancelled his indentures by running away. I would that sinners here would break their league with death, and violate their covenant with hell, by escaping for their lives to Jesus, who receives all such runaways. We want neither leave nor licence for quitting the service of sin and Satan, neither is it a subject which demands a month's consideration : in this matter instantaneous action is the surest wisdom. Lot did not stop to consult the king of Sodom as to whether he might quit his dominions, neither did he consult the parish officers as to the propriety of speedily deserting his home ; but with the angel's hand pressing them, he and his fled from the city. Nay, one fled not ; she looked and lingered, and that lingering cost her her life ! That pillar of salt is the eloquent monitor to us to avoid delays when we are bidden to flee for our lives. Sinner, dost thou wish to be a pillar of salt ? Wilt thou halt between two opinions, until God's anger shall doom thee to final impenitence ? Wilt thou trifle with mercy till justice smite thee ? Up, man, and while thy day of grace continues, fly thou into the arms of love.

The text implies that *the prodigal aroused himself*, and put forth all his energies. It is said, "*he arose* ;" the word suggests that he had till then been asleep upon the bed of sloth, or the couch of presumption. Like Samson in Delilah's lap, he had been supine, inactive, and unstrung ; but now, startled from his lethargy, he lifts up his eyes, he girds up his loins, he shakes off the spell which had enthralled him, he puts forth every power, he arouses his whole nature, and he spares no exertion until he returns to his father.

Men are not saved between sleeping and waking. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Grace does not stupefy us, it but arouses us. Surely, sirs, it is worth while making an awful effort to escape from eternal wrath. It is worth while summoning up every faculty and power and emotion and passion of your being, and saying to yourself, "I cannot be lost ; I will not be lost : I am resolved that I will find mercy through Jesus Christ." The worst of it is, O sinners, ye are so sluggish, so indifferent, so ready to let things happen as they may. Sin has bewitched and benumbed you. You sleep as on beds of down and forget that you are in danger of hell fire. You cry, "A little more rest, and a little more slumber, and a little more folding of the arms to sleep," and so you sleep on, though your damnation slumbereth not. Would to God you could be awakened. It is not in the power of my voice to arouse you ; but may the Lord Himself alarm you, for never were men more in danger. Let but your breath fail, or your blood pause, and you are lost for ever. Frailer than a cobweb is that life on which your eternal destiny depends. If you were wise you would not give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till you had found your God and been forgiven. Oh, when will you come to a real action ? How long will it be ere

you believe in Jesus? How long will you sport between the jaws of hell? How long dare you provoke the living God?

II. Secondly, HERE WAS A SOUL COMING INTO ACTUAL CONTACT WITH GOD,—“*He arose and came to his father.*” It would have been of no avail for him to have arisen if he had not come to his father. This is what the sinner has to do, and what the Spirit enables him to do: namely, to come straight away to his God. But, alas! very commonly, when men begin to be anxious, they go round about and hasten to a friend to tell him about it, or they even resort to a deceitful priest, and seek help from him. They fly to a saint or a virgin, and ask these to be mediators for them, instead of accepting the only Mediator Jesus Christ, and going to God at once by him. They fly to outward forms and ceremonies, or they turn to their Bibles, their prayers, their repentances, or their sermon-hearings; in fact, to anything rather than their God. But the prodigal knew better; he went to his father, and it will be a grand day for you, O sinner, when you do the same. Go straight away to your God in Christ Jesus. “Come here,” says the priest. Pass that fellow by. Get away to your Father. Reject an angel from heaven if he would detain you from the Lord. Go personally, directly, and at once to God in Christ Jesus. But surely I must perform some ceremony first? Not so did the prodigal, he arose and went at once to his father. Sinner, you must come to God, and Jesus is the way; go to him then, tell him you have done wrong, confess your sins to him, and yield yourself to him. Cry, “Father, I have sinned: forgive me, for Jesus’ sake.”

Alas! there are many anxious souls who do not go to others, but they look to themselves. They sit down and cry, “I want to repent; I want to feel my need; I want to be humble.” O man, get up! What are you at? Leave yourself and go to your Father. “Oh, but I have so little hope; my faith is very weak, and I am full of fears.” What matters your hopes or your fears while you are away from your Father? Your salvation does not lie within yourself, but in the Lord’s good will to you. You will never be at peace till, leaving all your doubts and your hopes, you come to your God and rest in his bosom. “Oh, but I want to conquer my propensities to sin, I want to master my strong temptations.” I know what it is you want. You want the best robe without your Father’s giving it you, and shoes on your feet of your own procuring; you do not like going in a beggar’s suit and receiving all from the Lord’s loving hand; but this pride of yours must be given up, and you must get away to God, or perish for ever. You must forget yourself, or only remember yourself so as to feel that you are bad throughout, and no more worthy to be called God’s son. Give yourself up as a sinking vessel that is not worth pumping, but must be left to go down, and get you into the life-boat of free grace. Think of God your Father—of him, I say, and of his dear Son, the one Mediator and Redeemer of the sons of men. There is your hope—to fly away from self and to reach your Father.

Do I hear you say, “Well, I shall continue in the means of grace, and I hope there to find my God.” I tell you, if you do that, and refuse to go to God, the means of grace will be the means of damnation to you. “I must wait at the pool,” says one. Then I solemnly

you that you will lie there and die ; for Jesus does not command to lie there, his bidding is, "Take up thy bed, and walk." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." You have to go to your Father, and not to the pool of Bethesda, or any other pool of mercies or means of grace. "But I mean to pray," says one. What do you pray for ? Can you expect the Lord to hear you while you do not hear him ? You will pray best with your head in your Father's lap, but the prayers of an unyielding, disobedient, unbelieving heart are no prayers. Prayers themselves will ruin you if they are made a substitute for going at once to God. Suppose the prodigal had sat down by the swine trough and said, "I will pray here," what would it have done for him ? or suppose he had wept there, what good would have come of it ? Praying and weeping were good enough when he had turned to his father, but they could not have been substituted for it. Your business is with God. Hasten to him at once. You have nothing to do with yourself, or your own doings, or what others can do for you. The turning point of salvation is, "he arose and came to his father." There must be a real, living, earnest, contact of your poor soul with God, a recognition that there is a God, and that God is speaking to you, and an actual speech of your soul to him, through Christ, for it is only God in Christ Jesus that is accessible at all. To come thus to God, we tell him that we are all wrong, and want to be reconciled to him ; we tell him we wish to be reconciled to him, and are ashamed of what we should have sinned against him ; we then put our trust in him, and we are saved. O soul, go to God : it matters not though the prayer you come with may be a very broken prayer, or even if it has no words in it, as the prodigal's prayer had when he said, "Make me as one of thy hired servants ;" the language of the prayer will not signify so long as you really approach to God. "Him that cometh to me," says Jesus, "I will in no wise cast out ;" and Jesus ever liveth to intercede for them that come to God through him. The great doctrine, then, is the great Protestant doctrine. The Romish doctrine says you must go round by the back door, and half-a-dozen of the servants must knock for you, and even then you may never be admitted ; but the grand old Protestant doctrine is, come to God yourself ; with no other mediator than Jesus Christ ; come just as you are, with no merits and good works ; trust in Jesus and your sins will be forgiven you.

There is my second point : there was action, and that action was in coming to God.

Now, thirdly, IN THAT ACTION THERE WAS AN ENTIRE YIELDING OF HIMSELF. In the prodigal's case, his proud independence and self-will were gone. In other days he demanded his portion, and was allowed to spend it as he pleased, but now he is willing to be as much under the rule as a hired servant, he has had enough of being his own master ; and is weary of the distance from God which self-will always keeps him at. He longs to get into a child's true place, namely, that of dependence and loving submission. The great mischief of all was his distance from his father, and he now feels it to be so. His great desire is to remove that distance by humbly returning, for then he knows that all other ills will come to an end. He yields up his

cherished freedom, his boasted independence, his liberty to think and do and say whatever he chose, and he longs to come under loving rule and wise guidance. Sinner, are you ready for this? If so, come and welcome; your father longs to press you to his bosom!

He gave up all idea of self-justification, for he said, "I have sinned." Before he would have said, "I have a right to do as I like with my own; who is to dictate how I shall spend my own money. If I do sow a few wild oats, every young man does the same. I have been very generous, if nothing else; nobody can call me greedy. I am no hypocrite. Look at your canting Methodists, how they deceive people! There's nothing of that in me, I'll warrant you; I am an outspoken man of the world; and after all, a good deal better in disposition than my elder brother, fine fellow though he pretends to be." But now the prodigal boasts no longer. Not a syllable of self-praise falls from his lips; he mournfully confesses, "I have sinned against heaven and before thee." Sinner, if you would be saved you also must come down from your high places, and acknowledge your iniquity. Confess that you have done wrong, and do not try to extenuate your offence; do not offer apologies and make your case better than it is, but humbly plead guilty and leave your soul in Jesu's hands. Of two things, to sin or to deny the sin, probably to deny the sin is the worse of the two, and shows a blacker heart. Acknowledge your fault, man, and tell your heavenly Father that if it were not for his mercy you would have been in hell, and that as it is you richly deserve to be there even now. Make your case rather blacker than it is if you can; this I say because I know you cannot do any such thing. When a man is in the hospital it cannot be of any service to him to pretend to be better than he is; he will not receive any more medical attention on that account, but rather the other way, for the worse his case the more likely is the physician to give him special notice. Oh, sinner, lay bare before God thy sores, thy putrifying sores of sin, the horrid ulcers of thy deep depravity, and cry, "O Lord, have mercy upon me?" This is the way of wisdom. Have done with pride and self-righteousness, and make thy appeal to the undeserved pity of the Lord, and thou wilt speed.

Observe that the prodigal yielded up himself so thoroughly that he owned his father's love to him to be an aggravation of his guilt: so I take it he means when he says, "Father, I have sinned." It adds an emphasis to the "*I have sinned*" when it follows after the word "*father*." "Thou good God, I have broken thy good laws; thou loving, tender, merciful God, I have done wrong wantonly and wickedly against thee. Thou hast been a very loving Father to me, and I have been a most ungenerous and shameless traitor to thee, rebelling without cause. I confess this frankly and humbly, and with many tears. Ah! hadst thou been a tyrant I might have gathered some apology from thy severity, but thou hast been a Father, and this makes it worse that I should sin against thee." It is sweet to hear such a confession as this poured out into the Father's bosom.

The penitent also yielded up all his supposed rights and claims upon his father, saying, "I am not worthy to be called thy son." He might have said, "I have sinned, but still I am thy child," and most of us would have thought it a very justifiable argument; but he does not

say so, he is too humble for that, he owns, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." A sinner is really broken down when he acknowledges that if God would have no mercy on him, but cast him away for ever, it would be no more than justice.

"Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce thee just in death;
And, if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well."

That soul is not far from peace which has ceased arguing and submits to the sentence. Oh, sinner, I urge thee, if thou wouldst find speedy rest, go and throw thyself at the foot of the cross where God meets such as thou art, and say, "Lord, here I am; do what thou wilt with me. Never a word of excuse will I offer, nor one single plea by way of extenuation. I am a mass of guilt and misery, but pity me, oh, pity me! No rights or claims have I; I have forfeited the rights of creatureship by becoming a rebel against thee. I am lost and utterly undone before the bar of thy justice. From that justice I flee and hide myself in the wounds of thy Son. According to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions!"

Once again, here was such a yielding up of himself to his father that no terms or conditions are mentioned or implied. He begs to be received, but a servant's place is good enough for him; amongst the cullions of the kitchen he is content to take his place, so long as he may be forgiven. He does not ask for a little liberty to sin, or stipulate for a little self-righteousness wherein he may boast; he gives all up. He is willing to be anything or nothing, just as his father pleases, so that he may but be numbered with his household. No weapons of rebellion are in his hands now. No secret opposition to his father's rule lingers in his soul, he is completely subdued, and lies at his father's feet. Our Lord never crushed a soul yet that lay prostrate at his feet, and he never will. He will stoop down and say, "Rise, my child; rise, for I have forgiven thee. Go and sin no more. I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Come and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.

IV. Notice further, and fourthly, that IN THIS ACT THERE WAS A TREASURE OF FAITH IN HIS FATHER—a measure, I say, meaning thereby not much faith, but some. A little faith saves the soul. There was faith in his father's power. He said, "In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare." Sinner, dost thou not believe that God is able to save thee; that through Jesus Christ he is able to supply thy soul's needs. Canst thou not get as far as this, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." The prodigal had also some faith in his father's readiness to pardon; for if he had not so hoped, he would never have returned to his father at all: if he had been sure that his father would never smile upon him he would never have returned to him. Sinner, do believe that God is merciful, for so he is. Believe, through Jesus Christ, that he willeth not the death of the sinner, but had rather that he should turn to him and live; for as

surely as God liveth, this is truth, and do not thou believe a lie concerning thy God. The Lord is not hard or harsh, but he rejoices to pardon great transgressions. The prodigal also believed in his father's readiness to bless him. He felt sure that his father would go as far as propriety would permit, for he said, "I am not worthy to be called thy son, but make me at least thy servant." In this also he admitted that his father was so good, that even to be his servant would be a great matter. He was contented even to get the lowest place, so long as he might be under the shade of so good a protector.

Ah, poor sinner, dost thou not believe that God will have mercy on thee if he can do so consistently with his justice? If thou believest that, I have good news to tell thee. Jesus Christ, his Son, has offered such an atonement, that God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth; he has mercy upon the vilest, and justifieth the ungodly, and accepteth the very chief of sinners through his dear Son. Oh, soul, have faith in the atonement. The atonement made by the personal sacrifice of the Son of God must be infinitely precious; believe thou that there is efficacy enough in it for thee. It is thy safety to fly to that atonement and cling to the Cross of Christ, and thou wilt honour God by so doing; is the only way in which thou canst honour him. Thou canst honour him by believing that he can save thee, even thee. The truest faith is that which believes in the mercy of God in the teeth of conscious unworthiness. The penitent in the parable went to his father too unworthy to be called his son, and yet he said, "My father." Faith has a way of seeing the blackness of sin, and yet believing that God can make the soul as white as snow. It is not faith that says, "I am a little sinner, and therefore God can forgive me;" but that is faith which cries, "I am a great sinner, an accursed and condemned sinner, and yet, for all that, God's infinite mercy can forgive me, and the blood of Christ can make me clean." Believe in the teeth of thy feelings, and in spite of thy conscience; believe in God, though everything within thee seems to say, "He cannot save thee; he will not save thee." Believe in God, sinner, over the tops of mountain sins. Do as John Bunyan says he did, for he was so afraid of his sins and of the punishment thereof, that he could not but run into God's arms, and he said, "Though he had held a drawn sword in his hands, I would have run on the very point of it, rather than have kept away from him." So do thou, poor sinner. Believe thy God. Believe in nothing else, but trust thy God, and thou wilt get the blessing. It is wonderful the power of faith over God, it binds his justice and constrains his grace. I do not know how to illustrate it better than by a little story. When I walked down my garden some time ago I found a dog amusing himself among the flowers. I knew that he was not a good gardener, and no dog of mine, so I threw a stick at him and bade him begone. After I had done so, he conquered me, and made me ashamed of having spoken roughly to him, for he picked up my stick, and, wagging his tail right pleasantly, he brought the stick to me, and dropped it at my feet. Do you think I could strike him or drive him away after that? No, I patted him and called him good names. The dog had conquered the man. And if you, poor sinner, dog as you are, can have confidence

ough in God to come to him just as you are, it is not in his heart to spurn you. There is an omnipotence in simple faith which will conquer even the divine Being himself. Only do but trust him as he reveals himself in Jesus, and you shall find salvation.

V. I have not time or strength to dwell longer here, and so I must notice, fifthly, that THIS ACT OF COMING INTO CONTACT WITH GOD IS PERFORMED BY THE SINNER JUST AS HE IS. I do not know how wretched the prodigal's appearance may have been, but I will be bound to say he had grown none the sweeter by having fed swine, nor do I suppose his garments had been very sumptuously embroidered by gathering husks for them from the trees. Yet, just as he was, he came. Surely he might have spent an hour profitably in cleansing his flesh and his clothes. But no, he said, "I will arise," and no sooner said than done! he did arise, and he came to his father. Every moment that a sinner stops away from God in order to get better he is but adding to his sin, for the radical sin of all is his being away from God and the longer he stays in it the more he sins. The attempt to perform good works apart from God is like the effort of a thief to set his stolen goods in order, his sole duty is to return them at once. The very same pride which leads men away from God may be seen in their self-conceited notion that they can improve themselves while still they refuse to return to him. The essence of their fault is that they are far off from God, and whatever they do, so long as that distance remains, nothing is effectually done. I say the radical of the whole matter is distance from God, and therefore the commencement of setting matters right lies in arising and returning to him from whom they have departed.

The prodigal was bound to go home just as he was, for there was nothing that he could do. He was reduced to such extremities that he could not purchase a fresh piece of cloth to mend his garments, nor a farthing's worth of soap with which to cleanse his flesh; and it is a great mercy when a man is so spiritually reduced that he cannot do anything but go to his God as a beggar, when he is so bankrupt that he cannot pay a farthing in the pound, when he is so lost that he cannot even repent or believe apart from God, but feels that he is for ever undone unless the Lord shall interpose. It is our wisdom to go to God for everything.

Moreover, there was nothing needed from the prodigal but to return to his father. When a child who has done wrong comes back, the more its face is blurred with tears the better. When a beggar asks for charity, the more his clothes are in rags the better. Are not rags and sores the very livery of beggars? I once gave a man a pair of shoes because he said he was in need of them; but after he had put them on and gone a little way I overtook him in a gateway taking them off in order to go barefooted again. I think they were patent leather, and what should a beggar do in such attire? He was changing them for "old shoes and clouted," those were suitable to his business. A sinner is never so well arrayed for pleading as when he comes in rags. At his worst, the sinner, for making an appeal to mercy, is at his best. And so, sinners, there is no need for you to linger; come just as you are. "But must we not wait for the Holy Spirit?" Ah, beloved, he

who is willing to arise and go to his Father has the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who moves us to return to God, and it is the spirit of the flesh or of the devil that would bid us wait.

How now, sinners? Some of you are sitting in those pews; where are you? I cannot find you out, but my Master can, he has made this sermon on purpose for you. "Well, but I would like to get home and pray." Pray where you are, in the pew. "But I cannot speak out aloud." You may if you like, I won't stop you. "But I should not like." Well, don't, then. God can hear you without a sound, though I wish sometimes we did hear people cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" I would gladly hear the prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But if men cannot hear you, the Lord can hear the cries of their hearts. Now, just sit still a minute, and say, "My God I must come to thee. Thou art in Jesus Christ, and in him thou has already come a great way to meet me. My soul wants thee; take me now, and make me what I ought to be. Forgive me, and accept me." It is the turning-point of a man's life when that is done, wherever it is, whether in a workshop, or in a saw-pit, in a church, or in a tabernacle; it does not matter where. There is the point—the getting to God in Christ, giving all up, and by faith resting in the mercy of God.

VI. The last point of all is this—THAT ACT WROUGHT THE GREATEST CONCEIVABLE CHANGE IN THE MAN. He was a new man after that. Harlots, winebibbers, you have lost your old companion now! He has gone to his Father, and his Father's company and yours will never agree. A man's return to his God means his leaving the chambers of vice and the tables of riot. You may depend upon it whenever you hear of a professing Christian living in uncleanness, he has not been living anywhere near his God. He may have talked a great deal about it, but God and unchastity never agree; if you have friendship with God you will have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

Now, too, the penitent has done with all degrading works to support himself. You will not find him feeding swine any more, or making a swine of himself either by trusting in priests or sacraments; he will not confess to a priest again, or pay a penny to get his mother out of purgatory; he is not such a fool as that any more. He has been to his God on his own account, and he does not want any of these shavelings to go to God for him. He has got away from that bondage. No more pig-feeding; no more superstition for him! "Why," says he, "I have access with boldness to the mercy-seat, and what have I to do with the priests of Rome?"

There is a change in him in all ways. Now he has come to his father his pride is broken down. He no longer glories in that which he calls his own; all his glory is in his father's free pardoning love. He never boasts of what he has, for he owns that he has nothing but what his father gives him; and though he is far better off than ever he was in his spendthrift days, yet he is as unassuming as a little child. He is a gentleman-commoner upon the bounty of his God, and lives from day to day by a royal grant from the table of the King of kings. Pride is gone, but content fills its room. He would have been contented to be one of the servants of the house, much more satisfied is he

to be a child. He loves his father with a new love; he cannot even mention his name without saying, "And he forgave me, he forgave me freely, he forgave me all, and he said, 'Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet.'" From the day of his restoration the prodigal is bound to his Father's home, and reckons it to be one of his greatest blessings that it is written in the covenant of grace, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."

This morning I believe that God in his mercy means to call many sinners to himself. I am often very much surprised to find how the Lord guides my word according to the persons before me. Last Sunday there came here a young son of a gentleman, a foreigner, from a distant land, under considerable impressions as to the truth of the Christian religion. His father is a follower of one of the ancient religions of the East, and this young gentleman naturally felt it a great difficulty that he would probably make his father angry if he became a Christian. Judge, then, how closely the message of last Sabbath came home to him, when the text was, "What if thy father answer thee roughly?" He came to tell me that he thanked God for that message, and he hoped to bear up under the trial, should persecution arise. I feel that I am with equal plainness speaking to some of you. I know I am. You are saying, "May I now go to God just as I am, and through Jesus Christ yield myself up; and will he forgive me?" Dear brother, or dear sister, wherever you may be, *try it*. That is the best thing to do: *try it*; and, if the angels do not set the bells in heaven ringing, God has altered from what he was last week, for I know he received poor sinners then, and he will receive them now. The worst thing I dread about you is, lest you should say, "I will think of it." *Don't* think of it. *Do it!* Concerning this no more thinking is needed; but to do it. Get away to God. Is it not according to nature that the creature should be at peace with its Creator? Is it not according to your conscience? Is there not something within you which cries, "Go to God in Christ Jesus." In the case of that poor prodigal, the famine said to him, "Go home!" Bread was dear, meat was scarce, he was hungry, and every pang of want said, "Go home! Go home!" When he went to his old friend the citizen, and he asked him for help, his scowling looks said, "Why don't you go home?" There is a time with sinners when even their old companions seem to say, "We do not want you. You are too miserable and melancholy. Why don't you go home?" They sent him to feed swine, and the very hogs grunted, "Go home?" When he picked up those carob husks and tried to eat them, they crackled, "Go home." He looked upon his rags, and they gaped at him, "Go home." His hungry belly and his faintness cried, "Go home." Then he thought of his father's face, and how kindly it had looked at him, and it seemed to say, "Come home!" He remembered the bread enough and to spare, and every morsel seemed to say, "Come home!" He pictured the servants sitting down to dinner and feasting to the full, and every one of them seemed to look right away over the wilderness to him and to say, "Come home! Thy father feeds us well. Come home!" Everything said, "Come home!" Only the devil whispered, "Never go back. Fight

it out! Better starve than yield! Die game!" But then he had got away from the devil this once, for he had come to himself, and he said, "No; I will arise and go to my father." Oh that you would be equally wise. Sinner, what is the use of being damned for the sake of a little pride. Yield thee, man! Down with thy pride! You will not find it so hard to submit if you remember that dear Father who loved us and gave himself for us in the person of his own dear Son. You will find it sweet to yield to such a friend. And when you get your head in his bosom, and feel his warm kisses on your cheek, you will soon feel that it is sweet to weep for sin—sweet to confess your wrong doing, and sweeter still to hear him say, "I have blotted out thy sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thy transgressions." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

God Almighty grant this may be the case with hundreds of you this morning. He shall have all the glory of it, but my heart shall be very glad, for I feel nothing of the spirit of the elder brother within me, but the greatest conceivable joy at the thought of making merry with you by-and-by, when you come to own my Lord and Master, and wesit together at the sacramental feast, rejoicing in his love. God bless you, for his sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—136 (Song I.), 614, 612.

"The Interpreter" is now complete, and may be procured in cloth at 25s.; in Persian, £1 12s.; and in best Morocco for £2 2s. Families using this work will go through the substance of the Scriptures in a year, and parents will find it a great assistance to have the passage for each occasion of family prayer selected and explained for them. The work has cost Mr. Spurgeon much labour, and he trusts it will be made proportionately useful. Passmore and Alabaster, Publishers, 4, Paternoster Buildings.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A SONG AMONG THE LILIES.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 30TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies."—Song of Solomon ii. 16.

LAST Sabbath, in our morning's sermon,* we began at the beginning and described the turning point in which the sinner sets his face towards his God, and for the first time gives practical evidence of spiritual life in his soul. He bestirs himself, he goes to his Father's house, and speedily is pressed to his Father's bosom, forgiven, accepted, and rejoiced over. This morning we are going far beyond that stage, to a position which I may call the very crown and summit of the spiritual life. We would conduct you from the door-step to the innermost chamber, from the outer court to the Holy of Holies; and we pray the Holy Spirit to enable each one of us who have entered in by Christ Jesus, the door, to pass boldly into the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High, and sing with joyful heart the words of our text, "My beloved is mine, and I am his."

"For he is mine and I am his,
The God whom I adore;
My Father, Saviour, Comforter,
Now and for evermore."

This passage describes a high state of grace, and it is worthy of note that the description is full of Christ. This is instructive, for this is not an exceptional case, it is only one fulfilment of a general rule. Our estimate of Christ is the best gauge of our spiritual condition; as the thermometer rises in proportion to the increased warmth of the air, so does our estimate of Jesus rise as our spiritual life increases in vigour and fervency. Tell me what you think of Jesus and I will tell

* "The Turning Point," No. 1,189.

No. 1,190.

you what to think of yourself. Christ is all to us, yea, more than all when we are thoroughly sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost. When pride of self fills up the soul, there is little room for Jesus; but when Jesus is fully loved, self is subdued, and sin driven out of the throne. If we think little of the Lord Jesus we have very great cause to account ourselves spiritually blind, and naked, and poor, and miserable. The rebel despises his lawful sovereign, but the favoured courtier is enthusiastic in his praise. Christ crucified is the revealer of many hearts, the touchstone by which the pure gold and the counterfeit metal are discerned; his very name is as a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap; false professors cannot endure it, but true believers triumph therein. We are growing in grace when we grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let everything else be gone, and let Christ fill up the entire space of our soul, then, and only then, are we rising out of the vanity of the flesh into the real life of God.

Beloved, the grandest facts in all the world to a truly spiritual man are not the rise and fall of empires, the marches of victory, or the desolations of defeat; he cares neither for crowns nor mitres, swords nor shields; his admiring gaze is wholly fixed upon Christ and his cross and cause. To him Jesus is the centre of history, the soul and core of providence. He desires no knowledge so much as that which concerns his Redeemer and Lord; his science deals with what Jesus is and what he is to be, what he has done, what he is doing, and what he will do. The believer is mainly anxious as to how Jesus can be glorified, and how sinners can be brought to know him. That which concerns the honour of Jesus is our chief concern from day to day; as for other matters let the Lord do as he wills with them, only let Jesus Christ be magnified, and all the rest of the world's story has small significance for us. The Beloved is the head and front, the heart and soul of the Christian's delight when his heart is in its best state. Our text is the portrait of a heavenly-minded child of God, or rather, it is the music of his well stringed harp when love as minstrel touches the tenderest chords: "My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies."

We shall note then, first, that here is *a delighting to have Christ*; secondly, *a delighting to belong to Christ*; and thirdly, *a delighting at the very thought of Christ*.

I. First, here is A DELIGHTING TO HAVE CHRIST. "*My beloved is mine.*" The spouse makes this the first of her joy notes, the cornerstone of her peace, the fountain of her bliss, the crown of her glory. Observe here that where such an expression is truthfully used the existence of the Beloved is matter of fact. Scepticism, and questioning have no place with those who thus sing. There are dreamers nowadays who cast doubt on everything; taking to themselves the name of philosophers, and professing to know something of science, they make statements worthy only of idiots, and demand for their self-evidently false assertions the assent of rational men. The word "philosopher" will soon come to mean a lover of ignorance, and the term "a scientific man" will be understood as meaning a fool, who has said in his heart there is no God. Such attacks upon the eternal verities of

faith can have no effect upon hearts enamoured of the Son of God dwelling in his immediate presence, they have passed the region of questioning far behind, and in this we entered into rest. The power of love has convinced us; in a doubt as to the reality and glory of our Well-beloved would it to us, and therefore love has cast it out. We use no per-its, or ifs concerning our Beloved, but we say positively that that he is ours. We believe that we have better evidence of power, Godhead, and love to us than can be given for any. So far from being abashed by the cavils of sceptics, or beneath the question, "Is there such a Beloved?" we are not answer in this matter, for we know that there is; our love the question, and does not condescend to answer it save by those who seriously inquire to "come and see" for themselves. ever found, beloved, that when a time of chilling doubt over us—and such ague fits will come—we have only to meditations upon Jesus and he becomes his own evidence by our hearts burn within us with love of his character and per-then doubt is doomed. We do not slay our unbelief by it we annihilate it by affection. The influence of love to Jesus soul is so magical—I wish I had a better word—so elevating, ng, so transporting, it gives such a peace, and withal inspires and lofty aspirations, that the effect proves the cause. ch is holy is true, and that which is true cannot rise out of ch is false. We may safely judge a tree by its fruit, and a by its result: that which produces in us self-denial, purity, ness, and truth, cannot itself be false, and yet the love of es this beyond everything else. There must be truth for a ere truth is the effect; and thus love, by the savour which it ver the soul by contemplation of Christ, puts its foot upon the doubt and triumphantly utters bold, confident declarations, veal the full assurance of faith. New-born love to Jesus, in its cradle, like a young Hercules, takes the serpents of doubt gles them. He who can say from his heart "My Beloved," is who is in the way to confirmed faith. Love cannot, will not ; casts away the crutches of argument and flies on the wings of enjoyment, singing her nuptial hymn, "My Beloved is mine, his."

case before us *the love of the heavenly-minded one is perceived nkedged by herself*. "My beloved," saith she; it is no latent she knows that she loves him, and solemnly avows it. She whisper, "I hope I love the peerless one," but she sings, oved." There is no doubt in her soul about her passion for ether lovely one. Ah, dear friends, when you feel the flame ithin your soul, and give it practical expression, you will no quire, "Do I love the Lord or no?" Then your inner cons will dispense with evidences. Those are dark days when e evidences; well may we then fast, for the Bridegroom is not ; but when he abides with us, enjoyment of his fellowship s all evidences. I want no evidence to prove that food is en it is still in my mouth; I want no evidence of the

delight to my soul, causing me to soar on high and enjoy sweet communion, I am constrained by love to send you this acknowledgment, hoping that perhaps you may be cheered a little by it in your arduous labours; and if our heavenly Father see fit, this my testimony to his faithfulness may be blessed by him to the comfort and encouragement of some afflicted ones in your flock, as I know that *all* these things work together for good to them that love God." Think of this unselfish sufferer having a letter written to comfort me. One would have thought he needed comforting himself, but the Lord so cheers him that, instead of asking for consolation, he does not mention in his letter that he has lost his leg, or that he is paralysed, or has lost his sight. He only tells me of his joy and peace. Now, if children of God in such extremities can yet bear testimony to his faithfulness, are you going to run away because some foolish person or other sneers at you? Will you in cowardly fashion desert the standard because fools point their fingers at you? If so, are you made of the same stuff as the true saints? Have you the same backbone of divine grace as they? Assuredly not. May the Lord in his infinite mercy give you such a sound conversion that, whatever trial comes, you may still sing, "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord and glory in the God of my salvation."

If I am addressing any one who has persecuted God's saints in any way, let me say, "Mind what you are at; there are many things a man will bear, but if you meddle with his children it will stir his soul, that is a tender point with all fathers." Nothing provokes the Lord like interfering with his children. Mind what you are at. And, oh, I pray the Lord, if you have done it ignorantly, really thinking them to be wrong, and only scoffing at them because you thought them hypocrites, may he that spake out of heaven to Saul, and said, "Why persecutest thou me?" let you see that you have really been wounding Jesus himself. May he make you see that those tears which you have forced from that faithful woman, and those sleepless nights which you have caused to that earnest man, were so much of evil done unto Christ, for which he will reckon with you at the last. Turn you unto the Lord Jesus, and may the Holy Spirit grant you to repent of this your wickedness, for Jesus is willing to receive and bless even you, as he did Paul of old. Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you also shall be saved. God bless you all, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark iv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—76, 670, 667.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE TURNING POINT.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 23RD, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And he arose, and came to his father."—Luke xv. 20.

This sentence expresses the true turning point in the prodigal's life. Many other matters led up to it, and before he came to it there was much in him that was very hopeful; but this was the point itself, and he never reached it he would have remained a prodigal, but never have been the prodigal restored, and his life would have been a warning rather than an instruction to us. "He arose, and came to his father." Speaking, as I do, in extreme weakness, I have no reserve to spare; and while my voice holds out I shall speak straight to the point, and I pray the Lord to make every syllable practical and profitable by his Holy Spirit.

We shall begin by noticing that **HERE WAS ACTION**—"He arose, and came to his father." He had already been in a state of thoughtfulness; he had come to himself, but now he was to go further, and come to his father. He had considered the past, and weighed it up, seen the hollowness of all the world's pleasures; he had seen his position in reference to his father, and his prospects if he remained in that far-off country; he had thought upon what he ought to do, and would be the probable result of such a course; but now he passed from the dreaminess of thought into matter-of-fact acting and doing. How long will it be, dear hearers, before you will do the same? We are glad to have you thoughtful; we hope that a great point is reached when you are led to consider your ways, to ponder your condition, to look earnestly into the future, for thoughtlessness is the ruin of the traveller to eternity, and by its means the unwary fall into the pit of carnal security and perish therein. But some of you have among the "thoughtful" quite long enough; it is time you passed to a more practical stage. It is high time that you came to action; it would have been better if you had acted already; for, in the matter of obedience to God, first thoughts are best. When a man's life hangs in the balance, No. 1,189.

So that, while the possession is rare, the tenure is rare also, and it is the life of our life, and the light of our delight that we can sing—

"Yea, thou art mine, my blessed Lord,
O my Belovèd, thou art mine!
And, purchased with thy precious blood,
My God and Saviour, I am thine.

"MY CHRIST! Oh, sing it in the heavens,
Let every angel lift his voice;
Sound with ten thousand harps his praise,
With me, ye heavenly hosts, rejoice.

"The gift unspeakable is given,
The grace of God has made him mine;
And, now, before both earth and heaven,
Lord, I will own that I am thine."

Now, beloved friends, I cannot talk about this as I feel, I can only give you hints of that which fills me to the full with joy. I beg you to contemplate for a single moment the delight which is stored up in this fact, that the blessed Son of God, the "brightness of the Father's glory," is all our own. Whatever else we may have, or may not have, he is ours. I may not exhibit in my character all the grace I could wish, but "My beloved is mine"; I may have only one talent, but "My beloved is mine"; I may be very poor and very obscure, but "My beloved is mine"; I may have neither health nor wealth, but "My beloved is mine"; I may not be what I want to be, but "My beloved is mine." Yea, he is altogether mine, his Godhead and his manhood, his life, his death, his attributes, and prerogatives, yea, all he is, all he was, all he ever will be, all he has done, and all he ever will do, is mine. I possess not a portion in Christ, but the whole of him. All his saints own him, but I own him as much as if there were never another saint to claim him. Child of God, do you see this? In other inheritances, if there are many heirs, there is so much the less for each, but in this great possession every one who has Christ has a whole Christ all to himself, from the head of much fine gold, down to his legs, which are as pillars of marble. The whole of his boundless heart of love, his whole arm of infinite might, and his whole head of matchless wisdom,—all is for thee, beloved. Whoever thou mayst be, if thou dost indeed trust in Jesus, he is all thine own.

My beloved is all mine, and absolutely mine; not mine to look at and talk about merely, but mine to trust in, to speak to, to depend upon, to fly to in every troublous hour, yea, mine to feed upon, for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. Our beloved is not ours only to use in certain ways, but ours outright, without restriction. I may draw what I will from him, and both what I take and what I leave are mine. He himself in his ever glorious person is mine, and mine always. Mine when I know it, and mine when I do not know it; mine when I am sure of it, and mine when I doubt it; mine by day, and mine by night; mine when I walk in holiness, ay, and mine when I sin, for "if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He is mine on the hill Mizar, and mine in the swellings of Jordan; mine by the grave where

bury those I love, mine when I shall be buried there myself, mine when I rise again; mine in judgment, and mine in glory; for ever mine.

Note well that it is written, "My beloved is *mine*," in the singular. It is yours, I am glad of it; but still to me it is most sweet that he is mine. It is well to bless God that others have a possession in Christ, but what would that avail if we were strangers to him ourselves? The marrow and the fatness lie in the personal pronoun singular, "*My* beloved is *mine*." "I am so glad that Jesus loves *me*." I for a blessed grip with both hands on such a Christ as this! I serve well that he is ours *as our Beloved*, so that he is ours as whatever our love makes of him. Our love can never praise him enough, speak well enough of him, she thinks all descriptions fall short of his deservings; well, then, Jesus is ours at his best; if we think him glorious, he is ours in all that glory. Our love says that he is a fair, lovely, sweet, and precious Christ, and let us be sure that, however lovely, sweet, and precious he is, he is all ours. Our love says there is none like him, he is King of kings and Lord of lords, he is the ever-living; well, as the King of kings and Lord of lords he is yours. I cannot think too much of him, but when you think your best he is yours at that best. He has not a glory so high that it is not yours, nor a lustre so brilliant that it is not yours. He is my beloved, and I could fain extol him, but never can I get beyond this golden circle, when I most extol him he is still mine.

Here, then, is the basis of Christian life, the foundation on which rests: to know that most surely Christ is altogether ours is the beginning of wisdom, the source of strength, the star of hope, the dawn of heaven.

II. The second portion of the text deals with DELIGHTING TO BE LONG TO CHRIST. "*I am his*." This is as sweet as the former sentence. I would venture to put a question to each loving wife here present—when you were married which was the sweetest thought to you, that you were your husband's, or that he was yours? Why, you find that neither sentence would be sweet alone: they are necessary to each other. Ask any fond, loving heart which of these declarations would best be parted with, and they will tell you that neither can be given up. Christ is mine, but if I were not his it would be a sorry case, and if I were his and he were not mine it would be a wretched sadness. These two things are joined together with diamond rivets "*My beloved is mine, and I am his*." Put the two together, and we have reached the summit of delight.

That we are his is a fact that may be proven—yea, it should need no proving, but be manifest to all that "*I am his*." Certainly we are his by creation: he who made us should have us. We are his because his Father gave us to him, and we are his because he chose us. Creation, redemption, election are his triple hold upon us. We are his because he bought us with his blood, his because he called us by his grace, his because he is married to us, and we are his spouse. We are his, moreover, to our own consciousness, because we have heartily, from the most depths of our being, given ourselves up to him, bound by love to him for ever. We feel we must have Christ, and be Christ's,

or die—"For me to live is Christ." Brethren and sisters, mind you attend to this clause; I am sure you will if the former one is true to you. If you can say, "My beloved is mine," you will be sure to add, "I am his, I must be his, I will be his: I live not unless I am his, for I count that wherein I am not his I am dead, and I only live wherein I live to him." My very soul is conscious that I am his.

Now *this puts very great honour upon us*. I have known the time when I could say "My beloved is mine" in a very humble trembling manner, but I did not dare to add "I am his" because I did not think I was worth his having. I dared not hope that "I am his" would ever be written in the same book side by side with "My beloved is mine." Poor sinner, first lay hold on Jesus, and then you will discover that Jesus values you. You will prize him first, and then you will find out that he prizes you, and that though you do not feel worthy to be flung on a dunghill, yet Jesus has put a value upon you, saying "Since thou wert precious in my sight thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." It is no small joy to know that we poor sinners are worth Christ's having, and that he has even said, "They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels."

This second part of the text is true as *absolutely* as the first. "I am his"—not my goods only, nor my time, nor my talents, nor what I can spare, but "I am his." I fear that some Christians have never understood this. They give the Lord a little of their surplus, which they never miss. The poor widow who gave all her living, had the true idea of her relation to her Lord. She would have put herself into the treasury if she could, for she felt "I am his." As for myself, I wish I could be dropped bodily through the little slit of Christ's treasure box, and be in his casket for ever, never to be heard of any more as my own, but to be wholly my Lord's. Paul desired to spend and be spent. It is not easy to do those two things distinctly with money, for when you spend a thing it is spent at one and the same time, but the apostle meant that he would spend himself by activity, and then when he could do no more, he would be glad to be spent by passive endurance for Christ's sake. The believer feels that he belongs to Jesus absolutely; let the Lord employ him as he may, or try him as he pleases; let him take away all earthly friends from him or surround him with comforts; let him either depress him or exalt him, let him use him for little things or great things, or not use him at all, but lay him on the shelf; it is enough that the Lord does it, and the true heart is content, for it truthfully confesses, "I am his. I have no mortgage or lien upon myself, so that I can call a part of my being my own, but I am absolutely and unreservedly my Lord's sole property." Do you feel this, brethren and sisters? I pray God you may.

Blessed be God, this is true *evermore*—"I am his;" his to-day, in the house of worship, and his to-morrow in the house of business; his as a singer in the sanctuary, and his as a toiler in the workshop; his when I am preaching, and equally his when I am walking the streets; his while I live, his when I die; his when my soul ascends and my

body lies mouldering in the grave ; the whole personality of my manhood is altogether his for ever and for ever.

This belonging to the Well-beloved is a matter of fact and practice, not a thing to be talked about only, but really to be acted on. I am treading on tender ground now, but I would to God that every Christian could really say this without lying : "I do live unto Christ in all things, for I am his. When I rise in the morning I wake up as his, when I sit down to a meal I eat as his, and drink as his. I eat, and drink, and sleep unto the Lord, in everything giving thanks unto him. It is blessed even to sleep as the Lord's beloved, to dream as his Abrahams and Jacobs do, to awake at night and sing like David, and then drop off to "sleep in Jesus." "It is a high condition," say you. I grant it, but it is where we ought to abide. The whole of our time and energy should be consecrated by this great master principle, "*I am his.*" Can you say it? Never rest till you can. And if you can, beloved, it involves great privilege. "I am his," then am I honoured by having such an owner. If a horse or a sheep is said to belong to the Queen, everybody thinks much of it : now you are not the Queen's, but you are the Lord's, and that is far more. Through belonging to Christ you are safe, for he will surely keep his own. He will not lose his own sheep, he paid too dear a price for them to lose them. Against all the powers of earth and hell the Redeemer will hold his own and keep them to the end. If you are his he will provide for you. A good husband careth for his spouse, and even thus the Lord Jesus Christ cares for those who are betrothed unto him. You will be perfected too, for whatever Christ has he will make worthy of himself and bring it to glory. It is because we are his that we shall get to heaven, for he has said, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." Because they are his he would have them with him.

Now, give your thoughts licence to wonder that any one of us should be able to say, "I am his." "I who used to be so giddy and thoughtless, so sceptical, and perhaps profane, I am his." Ay, and some of you can say, "I who used to be passionate and proud, I who was a drunkard, I whose lips were black with blasphemy, I am his." Glory be unto thee, O Jesus Christ, for this, that thou hast taken up such worthless things as we are and made us thine. No longer do we belong to this present evil world, we live for the world to come. We do not even belong to the church, so as to make it our master ; we are part of the flock, but like all the rest we belong to the Great Shepherd. We will not give ourselves up to any party, or become the slave of any denomination, for we belong to Christ. We do not belong to sin, or self, or Satan ; we belong entirely, exclusively, and irrevocably to the Lord Jesus Christ. Another master waits upon us and asks us to give our energies to his services, but our answer is, "I am already engaged." "How is that?" "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus, and therefore from henceforth trouble me no more." "But can you not serve me in part?" "No, sir, I cannot serve two masters ; I am not like a man who can do as he pleases, I have no time to call my own." "How is that?" "I belong to Christ, I am wholly his. If there is anything to be done for him I am his man to the best of

my ability; I decline no service to which he calls me, but I can serve no other Lord." Lord Jesus, help each one of us now to say—

"I am thine, and thine alone,
This I gladly, fully own;
And in all my works and ways,
Only now would seek thy praise."

III. To conclude: the saint feels DELIGHT IN THE VERY THOUGHT OF CHRIST. "*He feedeth among the lilies.*" When we love any persons, and we are away from home, we delight to think of them, and to remember what they are doing. You are a husband travelling in a foreign land; this morning 'you said to yourself, "At this time they are just getting up at home." Perhaps the time is different, for you are in another longitude, and you say to yourself, "Ah, now the dear children are just getting ready to go to the Sabbath-school;" and by-and-by you think they are at dinner. So delight in the thought of Christ made the church say, "He feedeth among the lilies." She was pleased to think of where he was and what he was doing.

Now, *where is Jesus?* What are these lilies? Do not these lilies represent the pure in heart, with whom Jesus dwells? The spouse used the imagery which her Lord had put into her mouth. He said, "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters," and she appropriates the symbol to all the saints. A preacher who is great at spiritualising has well said on this verse, "The straight stalk, standing up erect from the earth, its flowers as high from the ground as possible, do they not tell us of heavenly-mindedness? Do they not seem to say, 'Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth'? And if the spotless snow of the leaves teaches us of grace, then the gold of the anthers tells us of that crown which shall be the reward of grace." The violet and the primrose in spring nestle close to the earth, as if in sympathy with her chill condition, but the lily lifts up itself towards heaven in sympathy with the summer's light and splendour. The lily is frail, and such are the saints of God; were not Jesus among them to protect them the wild beast would soon tread them down. Frail as they are, they are surpassingly lovely, and their beauty is not that which is made with hands. It is a beauty put upon them by the Lord, for "they toil not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." The saints work not for life, and spin no righteousness of their own, and yet the royal righteousness which adorns them far surpasses all that wisdom could devise or wealth procure.

Where, then, is my Lord to-day? He is up and away, among the lilies of Paradise. In imagination I see those stately rows of milk-white lilies growing no longer among thorns: lilies which are never soiled with the dust of earth, which for ever glisten with the eternal dews of fellowship, while their roots drink in unfading life from the river of the water of life which waters the garden of the Lord. There is Jesus! Can you see him? He is fairer even than the lilies which bow their heads around him. But he is here too where we are, like lilies which have scarce opened yet, lily buds as yet, but still watered by the same river, and yielding in our measure the same

perfume. O ye lilies of Christ's own planting, he is among you; Jesus is in this house to-day, the unction which has made his garments so fragrant is discerned among us.

But *what is he doing* among the lilies? It is said, "He feedeth among the lilies." He is feeding himself, not *on* the lilies, but *among* them. Our Lord finds solace among his people. His delights are with the sons of men; he joys to see the graces of his people, to receive their love, and to discern his own image in their faces. As he said to the woman of Samaria, "Give me to drink," so does he say to each one of his people, "Give me to drink," and he is refreshed by their loving fellowship. But the text means that he is feeding his people. He feedeth that part of his flock redeemed by blood of which we read that "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them into living fountains of waters." Nor does he forget that part of his flock which is in the low lands of earth, but he gives them also their portion of food. He has fed us this morning, for he is the good Shepherd, and leaves none of his sheep to famish.

Then *what shall I do?* Well, I will abide among the lilies. His saints shall be my companions. Where they flourish I will try to grow. I will be often in their assemblies. Ay, and I will be a lily too. By faith I will neither toil nor spin in a legal fashion, but I will live by faith upon the Son of God, rooted in him. I would be pure in life, and I would have the golden anther of looking to the recompense of the reward. I would lift up my soul aloft towards heaven as the lily lifts up its flower. Jesus will come and feed by my side if I am a lily, and even I may yield him some pleasure by my humble gratitude.

Beloved, this is a choice subject, but it is more sweet as a matter of fact than mere hearing can make it. "He feedeth among the lilies." This is our joy, that Christ is in his church, and the pith of all I want to say is this: never think of yourself or of the church apart from Jesus. The spouse says, "My beloved is mine, and I am his"; she weaves the two into one. The cause of the church is the cause of Christ; the work of God will never be accomplished by the church apart from Christ, her power lies in his being in her midst. He feedeth among the lilies, and therefore those lilies shall never be destroyed, but their sweetness shall make fragrant all the earth. The church of Christ, working with her Lord, must conquer, but never if she tries to stand alone or to compass any end apart from him.

As for each one of us personally, let us not think of ourselves apart from Christ, nor of Christ apart from us. Let George Herbert's prayer be ours.

"Oh, be mine still, still make me thine,
Or rather make nor mine nor thine."

Let *mine* melt into *thine*. Oh, to have joint stock with Christ, and to trade under one name; to be married to Christ and lose our old name, and wear his name, and say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." As the wife is lost in the husband, and the stone in the building, and the branch in the vine, and the member in the head, we would be so amalgamated with Christ, and have such fellowship with him that there shall be no more mine nor thine.

Last of all, poor sinner, you will say, "There is nothing in all this for me," and I should not like to send you away without a word. You are saying, "This is a day of good tidings, but it is only for God's own people." I beg you to read through the first and second chapters of the Song, and see who it was that said, "My beloved is mine," because I should not wonder but what you are very like her. She was one who confessed, "I am black"; and so are you. Perhaps grace will, one of these days, help you to say, "I am comely." She was one with whom her mother's children were angry—perhaps you, too, are a speckled bird. She had done servile work, for they made her a keeper of the vineyards. I should not wonder but what you are doing servile work, too, trying to save yourself instead of accepting the salvation which Jesus has already wrought out for sinners. So it came to pass that she became very sorrowful and passed through a winter of rain and cold. Perhaps you are there; and yet you know she came out of it, her winter was past, and the birds began to sing. She had been hidden in the secret places of the stairs, as you are now; but she was called out from the dust and cobwebs to see the face of her Lord.

One thing I wish to whisper in your ears—she was in the clefts of the rock. O soul, if thou canst but get there, if thou canst shelter in the riven side of our Beloved, that deep gash of the spear from which flowed blood and water, "to be of sin the double cure"; if thou canst get there, I say, though thou be black and grimed with sin, and an accursed sinner, only fit to be a firebrand in hell, yet shalt thou, even thou, be able to sing with all the rapture of the liveliest saint on earth, and one day with all the transport of the brightest ones above, "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies." There go your way with those silver bells ringing in your ears; they ring a marriage peal to saints, but they ring also a cheery invitation to sinners, and this is the tune they are set to—Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Sinner, come! God bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Solomon's Song ii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—660, 668, 814.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 6TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Christ died for the ungodly."—Romans v. 6.

In this verse the human race is described as a sick man, whose disease is so far advanced that he is altogether without strength: no power remains in his system to throw off his mortal malady, nor does he desire to do so; he could not save himself from his disease if he would, and would not if he could. I have no doubt that the apostle had in his eye the description of the helpless infant given by the prophet Ezekiel; it was an infant—an infant newly born—an infant deserted by its mother before the necessary offices of tenderness had been performed; left unwashed, unclothed, unfed, a prey to certain death under the most painful circumstances, forlorn, abandoned, hopeless. Our race is like the nation of Israel, its whole head is sick, and its whole heart faint. Such, unconverted men, are you! Only there is this darker shade in your picture, that your condition is not only your calamity, but your fault. In other diseases men are grieved at their sickness, but this is the worst feature in your case, that you love the evil which is destroying you. In addition to the pity which your case demands, no little blame must be measured out to you: you are without will for that which is good, your "cannot" means "will not," your inability is not physical but moral, not that of the blind who cannot see for want of eyes, but of the wilfully ignorant who refuse to look.

While man is in this condition Jesus interposes for his salvation. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly;" "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," according to "his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." The pith of my sermon will be an endeavour to declare that the reason of Christ's dying for us did not lie in our excellence; but where sin abounded grace did much more abound, for

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the persons for whom Jesus died were viewed by him as the reverse of good, and he came into the world to save those who are guilty before God, or, in the words of our text, "Christ died for the ungodly."

Now to our business. We shall dwell first upon *the fact*—"Christ died for the ungodly;" then we shall consider the *fair inferences* therefrom; and, thirdly, proceed to think and speak of *the proclamation* of this simple but wondrous truth.

I. First, here is **THE FACT**—"Christ died for the ungodly." Never did the human ear listen to a more astounding and yet cheering truth. Angels desire to look into it, and if men were wise they would ponder it night and day. Jesus, the Son of God, himself God over all, the infinitely glorious One, Creator of heaven and earth, out of love to men stooped to become a man and die. Christ, the thrice holy God, the pure-hearted man, in whom there was no sin and could be none, espoused the cause of the wicked. Jesus, whose doctrine makes deadly war on sin, whose Spirit is the destroyer of evil, whose whole self abhors iniquity, whose second advent will prove his indignation against transgression, yet undertook the cause of the impious, and even unto death pursued their salvation. The Christ of God, though he had no part or lot in the fall and the sin which has arisen out of it, has died to redeem us from its penalty, and, like the psalmist, he can cry, "Then I restored that which I took not away." Let all holy beings judge whether this is not the miracle of miracles!

Christ, the name given to our Lord, is an expressive word; it means "Anointed One," and indicates that he was sent upon a divine errand, commissioned by supreme authority. The Lord Jehovah said of old, "*I have laid help upon one that is mighty, I have exalted one chosen out of the people;*" and again, "*I have given him as a covenant to the people, a leader and commander to the people.*" Jesus was both set apart to this work, and qualified for it by the anointing of the Holy Ghost. He is no unauthorised saviour, no amateur deliverer, but an ambassador clothed with unbounded power from the great King, a Redeemer with full credentials from the Father. It is this ordained and appointed Saviour who has "died for the ungodly." Remember this, ye ungodly! Consider well who it was that came to lay down his life for such as you are.

The text says Christ *died*. He did a great deal besides dying, but the crowning act of his career of love for the ungodly, and that which rendered all the rest available to them, was his death for them. He actually gave up the ghost, not in fiction, but in fact. He laid down his life for us, breathing out his soul, even as other men do when they expire. That it might be indisputably clear that he was really dead, his heart was pierced with the soldier's spear, and forthwith came there out blood and water. The Roman governor would not have allowed the body to be removed from the cross had he not been duly certified that Jesus was indeed dead. His relatives and friends who wrapped him in linen and laid him in Joseph's tomb, were sorrowfully sure that all that lay before them was a corpse. The Christ really died, and in saying that, we mean that he suffered all the pangs incident to death; only he endured much more and worse, for his was a death of peculiar pain and shame, and was not only attended by the forsaking of man, but

by the departure of his God. That cry, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" was the innermost blackness of the thick darkness of death.

Our Lord's death was penal, inflicted upon him by divine justice; and rightly so, for on him lay our iniquities, and therefore on him must lay the suffering. "It pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." He died under circumstances which made his death most terrible. Condemned to a felon's gibbet, he was crucified amid a mob of jesters, with few sympathising eyes to gaze upon him; he bore the gaze of malice and the glance of scorn; he was hooted and jeered by a ribald throng, who were cruelly inventive in their taunts and blasphemies. There he hung, bleeding from many wounds, exposed to the sun, burning with fever, and devoured with thirst, under every circumstance of contumely, pain, and utter wretchedness; his death was of all deaths the most deadly death, and emphatically "Christ died."

But the pith of the text comes here, that "Christ died *for the ungodly*"; not for the righteous, not for the reverent and devout, but for the *ungodly*. Look at the original word, and you will find that it has the meaning of "impious, irreligious, and wicked." Our translation is by no means too strong, but scarcely expressive enough. To be ungodly, or godless, is to be in a dreadful state, but as use has softened the expression, perhaps you will see the sense more clearly if I read it, "Christ died for the *impious*," for those who have no reverence for God. Christ died for the godless, who, having cast off God, cast off with him all love for that which is right. I do not know a word that could more fitly describe the most irreligious of mankind than the original word in this place, and I believe it is used on purpose by the Spirit of God to convey to us the truth, which we are always slow to receive, that Christ did not die because men were good, or would be good, but died for them as ungodly—or, in other words, "he came to seek and to save that which was lost."

Observe, then, that when the Son of God determined to die for men, he viewed them as ungodly, and far from God by wicked works. In casting his eye over our race he did not say, "Here and there I see spirits of nobler mould, pure, truthful, truth-seeking, brave, disinterested, and just; and therefore, because of these choice ones, I will die for this fallen race." No; but looking on them all, he whose judgment is infallible returned this verdict, "They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Putting them down at that estimate, and nothing better, Christ died for them. He did not please himself with some rosy dream of a superior race yet to come, when the age of iron should give place to the age of gold,—some halcyon period of human development, in which civilisation would banish crime, and wisdom would conduct man back to God. Full well he knew that, left to itself, the world would grow worse and worse, and that by its very wisdom it would ~~darken~~ its own eyes. It was not because a golden age would come by natural progress, but just because such a thing was impossible, unless he died to procure it, that Jesus died for a race which, apart from him, could only develop into deeper damnation. Jesus viewed us as we

really were, not as our pride fancies us to be; he saw us to be without God, enemies to our own Creator, dead in trespasses and sins, corrupt, and set on mischief, and even in our occasional cry for good, searching for it with blinded judgment and prejudiced heart, so that we put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. He saw that in us was no good thing, but every possible evil, so that we were lost,—utterly, helplessly, hopelessly lost apart from him: yet viewing us as in that graceless and Godless plight and condition, he died for us.

I would have you remember that the view under which Jesus beheld us was not only the true one, but, for us, the kindly one; because had it been written that Christ died for the better sort, then each troubled spirit would have inferred "he died not for me." Had the merit of his death been the perquisite of honesty, where would have been the dying thief? If of chastity, where the woman that loved much? If of courageous fidelity, how would it have fared with the apostles, for they all forsook him and fled? There are times when the bravest man trembles lest he should be found a coward, the most disinterested frets about the selfishness of his heart, and the most pure is staggered by his own impurity; where, then, would have been hope for one of us, if the gospel had been only another form of law, and the benefits of the cross had been reserved as the rewards of virtue? The gospel does not come to us as a premium for virtue, but it presents us with forgiveness for sin. It is not a reward for health, but a medicine for sickness. Therefore, to meet all cases, it puts us down at our worst, and, like the good Samaritan with the wounded traveller, it comes to us where we are. "Christ died for the impious" is a great net which takes in even the leviathan sinner; and of all the creeping sinners innumerable which swarm the sea of sin, there is not one kind which this great net does not encompass.

Let us note well that in this condition lay the need of our race that Christ should die. I do not see how it could have been written, "Christ died for the good." To what end for the good? Why need they his death? If men are perfect, does God need to be reconciled to them? Was he ever opposed to holy beings? Impossible! On the other hand, were the good ever the enemies of God? If such there be are they not of necessity his friends? If man be by nature just with God, to what end should the Saviour die? "*The just for the unjust*" I can understand; but the "just dying for the just" were a double injustice—an injustice that the just should be punished at all, and another injustice that the just should be punished for them. Oh no! If Christ died, it must be because there was a penalty to be paid for sin committed, hence he must have died for those who had committed the sin. If Christ died, it must have been because "a fountain filled with blood" was necessary for the cleansing away of heinous stains; hence, it must have been for those who are defiled. Suppose there should be found anywhere in this world an unfallen man—perfectly innocent of all actual sin, and free from any tendency to it, there would be a superfluity of cruelty in the crucifixion of the innocent Christ for such an individual. What need has he that Christ should die for him, when he has in his own innocence the right to live? If there be found beneath the copes of heaven an individual who, notwithstanding some former slips and

flaws, can yet, by future diligence, completely justify himself before God, then it is clear that there is no need for Christ to die for him. I would not insult him by telling him that Christ died for him, for he would reply to me, "Why should he? Cannot I make myself just without him?" In the very nature of things it must be so, that if Christ Jesus dies he must die for the ungodly. Such agonies as his would not have been endured had there not been a cause, and what cause could there have been but sin?

Some have said that Jesus died as our example; but that is not altogether true. Christ's death is not absolutely an example for men, it was a march into a region of which he said, "Ye cannot follow me now." His life was our example, but not his death in all respects, for we are by no means bound to surrender ourselves voluntarily to our enemies as he did, but when persecuted in one city we are bidden to flee to another. To be willing to die for the truth is a most Christly thing, and in that Jesus is our example; but into the winepress which he trod it is not ours to enter, the voluntary element which was peculiar to his death renders it inimitable. He said, "I lay down my life of myself; no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." One word of his would have delivered him from his foes; he had but to say "Begone!" and the Roman guards must have fled like chaff before the wind. He died because he willed to do so; of his own accord he yielded up his spirit to the Father. It must have been as an atonement for the guilty; it could not have been as an example, for no man is bound voluntarily to die." Both the dictates of nature, and the command of the law, require us to preserve our lives. "Thou shalt not kill" means "Thou shalt not voluntarily give up thine own life any more than take the life of another." Jesus stood in a special position, and therefore he died; but his example would have been complete enough without his death, had it not been for the peculiar office which he had undertaken. We may fairly conclude that Christ died for men who needed such a death; and, as the good did not need it for an example—and in fact it is not an example to them—he must have died for the ungodly.

The sum of our text is this—all the benefits resulting from the Redeemer's passion, and from all the works that followed upon it, are for those who by nature are ungodly. His gospel is that sinners believing in him are saved. His sacrifice has put away sin from all who trust him, and, therefore, it was offered for those who had sin upon them before. "He rose again for our justification," but certainly not for the justification of those who can be justified by their own works. He ascended on high, and we are told that he "received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also." He lives to intercede, and Isaiah tells us that "He made intercession for the transgressors." The aim of his death, resurrection, ascension, and eternal life, is towards the sinful sons of men. His death has brought pardon, but it cannot be pardon for those who have no sin—pardon is only for the guilty. He is exalted on high "to give repentance," but surely not to give repentance to those who have never sinned, and have nothing to repent of. Repentance and remission both imply previous guilt in those who receive them: unless, then, these gifts of the exalted Saviour are mere shams and super-

fluties, they must be meant for the really guilty. From his side there flowed out water as well as blood—the water is intended to cleanse polluted nature, then certainly not the nature of the sinless, but the nature of the impure; and so both blood and water flowed for sinners who need the double purification. To-day the Holy Spirit regenerates men as the result of the Redeemer's death; and who can be regenerated but those who need a new heart and a right spirit? To regenerate the already pure and innocent were ridiculous; regeneration is a work which creates life where there was formerly death, gives a heart of flesh to those whose hearts were originally stone, and implants the love of holiness where sin once had sole dominion. Conversion is also another gift, which comes through his death, but does he turn those whose faces are already in the right direction? It cannot be. He converts the sinner from the error of his ways, he turns the disobedient into the right way, he leads back the stray sheep to the fold. Adoption is another gift which comes to us by the cross. Does the Lord adopt those who are already his sons by nature? If children already, what room is there for adoption? No; but the grand act of divine love is that which takes those who are "children of wrath even as others," and by sovereign grace puts them among the children, and makes them "heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ."

To-day I see the Good Shepherd in all the energy of his mighty love, going forth into the dreadful wilderness. For whom is he gone forth? For the ninety and nine who feed at home? No, but into the desert his love sends him, over hill and dale, to seek the one lost sheep which has gone astray. Behold, I see him arousing his church, like a good housewife, to cleanse her house. With the besom of the law she sweeps, and with the candle of the word she searches, and what for? For those bright new coined pieces fresh from the mint, which glitter safely in her purse? Assuredly not, but for that lost piece which has rolled away into the dust, and lies hidden in the dark corner. And lo! grandest of all visions! I see the Eternal Father, himself, in the infinity of his love, going forth in haste to meet a returning child. And whom does he go to meet? The elder brother returning from the field, bringing his sheaves with him? An Esau, who has brought him savoury meat such as his soul loveth? A Joseph whose godly life has made him lord over all Egypt? Nay, the Father leaves his home to meet a returning prodigal, who has companied with harlots, and grovelled among swine, who comes back to him in disgraceful rags, and disgusting filthiness! It is on a sinner's neck that the Father weeps; it is on a guilty cheek that he sets his kisses; it is for an unworthy one that the fatted calf is killed, and the best robe is worn, and the house is made merry with music and with dancing. Yes, tell it, and let it ring round earth and heaven, Christ died for the ungodly. Mercy seeks the guilty, grace has to do with the impious, the irreligious and the wicked. The physician has not come to heal the healthy, but to heal the sick. The great philanthropist has not come to bless the rich and the great, but the captive and the prisoner. He puts down the mighty from their seats, for he is a stern leveller, but he has come to lift the beggar from the dunghill, and to set him among princes, even the princes of his people. Sing ye, then, with the

Virgin, and let your song be loud and sweet,—“He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away.” This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” O ye guilty ones, believe in him and live. I. Let us now consider THE PLAIN INFERENCES FROM THIS FACT. Let me have your hearts as well as your ears, especially those of you who are not yet saved, for I desire you to be blessed by the truths I am about to utter; and oh, may the Spirit of God cause it to be so. It is clear to those of you who are ungodly—and if you are unconverted you are *in great danger*. Jesus would not interpose his life and bear bloody sweat and crown of thorns, and nails, and spear, and scorn mitigated, and death itself, if there were not solemn need and imminent peril. There is danger, solemn danger, for you. You are under the wrath of God already, and you will soon die, and then, as surely as you live, you will be lost, and lost for ever; as certain as the righteous enter into everlasting life, you will be driven into everlasting punishment. The cross is the danger signal to you, it warns you that if God spared not his only Son, he will not spare you. It is the lighthouse on the rocks of sin to warn you that swift and sure destruction awaits you if you continue to rebel against the Lord. Hell is an awful place, or Jesus had not needed to suffer such infinite agonies to save us from it.

It is also fairly to be inferred that *out of this danger only Christ can deliver the ungodly, and he only through his death*. If a less price than that of the life of the Son of God could have redeemed men, he would have been spared. When a country is at war, and you see a mother give up her only boy to fight her country's battles—her only well-loved, blameless son—you know that the battle must be raging very sorely, and that the country is in stern danger: for, if she could find a substitute for him, though she gave all her wealth, she would lavish it freely to spare her darling. If she were certain that in his heart a bullet would find its target, she must have strong love for her country, and her country must be in dire necessity ere she would bid him go. If, then, “God spared not his Son, but freely delivered him up for us all,” we must have been a dread necessity for it. It must have stood as: die he, or the sinner must, or justice must; and since justice would not, and the Father desired that the sinner should not, then Christ *must*; and so he did. Oh, miracle of love! I tell you, sinners, I cannot help yourselves, nor can all the priests of Rome or Oxford help you, let them perform their antics as they may; Jesus alone can save, and that only by his death. There on the bloody tree hangs all man's hope; if you enter heaven it must be by force of the incarnate God's bleeding out his life for you. You are in such peril that only his pierced hand can lift you out of it. Look to him, at once, I pray you, ere the proud waters go over your soul.

Then let it be noticed—and this is the point I want constantly to press before your view—that *Jesus died out of pure pity*. He must have died out of the most gratuitous benevolence to the undeserving, because the character of those for whom he died could not have attracted

him, but must have been repulsive to his holy soul. The impious, the godless—can Christ love these for their character? No, he loved them notwithstanding their offences, loved them as creatures fallen and miserable, loved them according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses and tender mercies, from pity, and not from admiration. Viewing them as ungodly, yet he loved them. This is extraordinary love! I do not wonder that some persons are loved by others, for they wear a potent charm in their countenances, their ways are winsome, and their characters charm you into affection; “but God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” He looked at us, and there was not a solitary beauty spot upon us: we were covered with “wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores,” distortions, defilements, and pollutions; and yet, for all that, Jesus loved us. He loved us because he would love us; because his heart was full of pity, and he could not let us perish. Pity moved him to seek the most needy objects that his love might display its utmost ability in lifting men from the lowest degradation, and putting them in the highest position of holiness and honour.

Observe another inference. If Christ died for the ungodly, *this fact leaves the ungodly no excuse if they do not come to him*, and believe in him unto salvation. Had it been otherwise they might have pleaded, “We are not fit to come.” But you are ungodly, and Christ died for the ungodly, why not for you? I hear the reply, “But I have been so very vile.” Yes, you have been impious, but your sin is not worse than this word ungodly will compass. Christ died for those who were wicked, thoroughly wicked. The Greek word is so expressive that it must take in your case, however wrongly you have acted. “But I cannot believe that Christ died for such as I am,” says one. Then, sir, mark! I hold you to your words, and charge you with contradicting the Eternal God to his teeth, and making him a liar. Your statement gives God the lie. The Lord declares that “Christ died for the ungodly,” and you say he did not, what is that but to make God a liar? How can you expect mercy if you persist in such proud unbelief? Believe the divine revelation. Close in at once with the gospel. Forsake your sins and believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall surely live. The fact that Christ died for the ungodly renders self-righteousness a folly. Why need a man pretend that he is good if “Christ died for the ungodly”? We have an orphanage, and the qualification for our orphanage is that the child for whom admission is sought shall be utterly destitute. I will suppose a widow trying to show to me and my fellow trustees that her boy is a fitting object for the charity; will she tell us that her child has a rich uncle? Will she enlarge upon her own capacities for earning a living? Why, this would be to argue against herself, and she is much too wise for that, I warrant you, for she knows that any such statements would damage rather than serve her cause. So, sinner, do not pretend to be righteous, do not dream that you are better than others, for that is to argue against yourself. Prove that you are not by nature ungodly, and you prove yourself to be one for whom Jesus did not die. Jesus comes to make the ungodly godly, and the sinful holy, but the raw material upon which he works is described in the text not by its goodness but

by its badness; it is for the ungodly that Jesus died. "Oh, but if I felt!" Felt what? Felt something which would make you better? Then you would not so clearly come under the description here given. If you are destitute of good feelings, and thoughts, and hopes, and emotions, you are ungodly, and "Christ died for the ungodly." Believe in him and you shall be saved from that ungodliness.

"Well," cries out some Pharisaic moralist, "this is dangerous doctrine." How so? Would it be dangerous doctrine to say that physicians exercise their skill to cure sick people and not healthy ones? Would that encourage sickness? Would that discourage health? You know better; you know that to inform the sick of a physician who can heal them is one of the best means for promoting their cure. If ungodly and impious men would take heart and run to the Saviour, and by him become cured of impiety and ungodliness, would not that be a good thing? Jesus has come to make the ungodly godly, the impious pious, the wicked obedient, and the dishonest upright. He has not come to save them *in* their sins, but *from* their sins; and this is the best of news for those who are diseased with sin. Self-righteousness is a folly, and despair is a crime, since Christ died for the ungodly. None are excluded hence but those who do themselves exclude; this great gate is set so wide open that the very worst of men may enter, and you, dear hearer, may enter now.

I think it is also very evident from our text that when they are saved, *the converted find no ground of boasting*; for when their hearts are renewed and made to love God they cannot say, "See how good I am," because they were not so by nature; they were ungodly, and, as such, Christ died for them. Whatever goodness there may be in them after conversion they ascribe it to the grace of God, since by nature they were alienated from God, and far removed from righteousness. If the truth of natural depravity be but known and felt, free grace must be believed in, and then all glorying is at an end.

This will also keep the saved ones from thinking lightly of sin. If God had forgiven sinners without an atonement they might have thought little of transgression, but now that pardon comes to them through the bitter griefs of their Redeemer they cannot but see it to be an exceeding great evil. When we look to Jesus dying on the cross we end our dalliance with sin, and utterly abhor the cause of so great suffering to so dear a Saviour. Every wound of Jesus is an argument against sin. We never know the full evil of our iniquities till we see what it cost the Redeemer to put them away.

Salvation by the death of Christ is the strongest conceivable promoter of all the things which are pure, honest, lovely, and of good report. It makes sin so loathsome that the saved one cannot take up even its name without dread. "I will take away the name of Baali out of thy mouth." He looks upon it as we should regard a knife rusted with gore, wherewith some villain had killed our mother, our wife, or child. Could we play with it? Could we bear it about our persons or endure it in our sight? No, accursed thing! stained with the heart's blood of my beloved, I would fain fling thee into the bottomless abyss! Sin is that dagger which stabbed the Saviour's

heart, and henceforth it must be the abomination of every man who has been redeemed by the atoning sacrifice.

To close this point. Christ's death for the ungodly is *the grandest argument to make the ungodly love him when they are saved*. To love Christ is the mainspring of obedience in men—how shall men be led to love him? If you would grow love, you must sow love. Go, then; and let men know the love of Christ to sinners, and they will, by grace, be moved to love him in return. No doubt all of us require to know the threatenings of the wrath of God; but that which soonest touches my heart is Christ's free love to an unworthy one like myself. When my sins seem blackest to me, and yet I know that through Christ's death I am forgiven, this blest assurance melts me down.

"If thou hadst bid thy thunders roll,
And lightnings flash, to blast my soul,
I still had stubborn been;
But mercy has my heart subdued,
A bleeding Saviour I have view'd,
And now I hate my sin."

I have heard of a soldier who had been put in prison for drunkenness and insubordination several times, and he had been also flogged, but nothing improved him. At last he was taken in the commission of another offence, and brought before the commanding officer, who said to him, "My man, I have tried everything in the martial code with you, except shooting you; you have been imprisoned and whipped, but nothing has changed you. I am determined to try something else with you. You have caused us a great deal of trouble and anxiety, and you seem resolved to do so still; I shall, therefore, change my plans with you, and I shall neither fine you, flog you, nor imprison you; I will see what kindness will do, and therefore I fully and freely forgive you." The man burst into tears, for he reckoned on a round number of lashes, and had steeled himself to bear them, but when he found he was to be forgiven, and set free, he said, "Sir, you shall not have to find fault with me again." Mercy won his heart. Now, sinner, in that fashion God is dealing with you. Great sinners! Ungodly sinners! God says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways. I have threatened you, and you hardened your hearts against me. Therefore, come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Well," says one, "I am afraid if you talk to sinners so they will go and sin more and more." Yes, there are brutes everywhere, who can be so unnatural as to sin because grace abounds, but I bless God there is such a thing as the influence of love, and I am rejoiced that many feel the force of it, and yield to the conquering arms of amazing grace. The Spirit of God wins the day by such arguments as these; love is the great battering-ram which opens gates of brass. When the Lord says, "I have blotted out thy transgressions like a cloud, and like a thick cloud thine iniquities," then the man is moved to repentance.

I can tell you hundreds and thousands of cases in which this infinite love has done all the good that morality itself could ask to have done; it has changed the heart and turned the entire current of the man's

ature from sin to righteousness. The sinner has believed, repented, turned from his evil ways, and become zealous for holiness. Looking to Jesus he has felt his sin forgiven, and he has started up a new man, to lead a new life. God grant it may be so this morning, and he shall have all the glory of it.

III. So now we must close—and this is the last point—THE PROCLAMATION OF THIS FACT, that “Christ died for the ungodly.” I would not mind if I were condemned to live fifty years more, and never to be allowed to speak but these five words, if I might be allowed to utter them in the ear of every man, and woman, and child who lives. “CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY” is the best message that even angels could bring to men. In the proclamation of this the whole church ought to take its share. Those of us who can address thousands should be diligent to cry aloud—“Christ died for the ungodly”; but those of you who can only speak to one, or write a letter to one, must keep on at this—“Christ died for the ungodly.” Shout it out, or whisper it out; print it in capitals, or write it in a lady’s hand—“Christ died for the ungodly.” Speak it solemnly; it is not a thing for jest. Speak it joyfully; it is not a theme for sorrow, but for joy. Speak it firmly; it is an indisputable fact. Facts of science, as they call them, are always questioned: this is unquestionable. Speak it earnestly; for if there be any truth which ought to arouse all a man’s soul it is this: “Christ died for the ungodly.” Speak it where the ungodly live, and that is at your own house. Speak it also down in the dark corners of the city, in the haunts of debauchery, in the home of the thief, in the den of the depraved. Tell it in the gaol; and sit down at the dying bed and read in a tender whisper—“Christ died for the ungodly.” When you pass the harlot in the street, do not give a toss with that proud head of yours, but remember that “Christ died for the ungodly;” and when you recollect those that injured you, say no bitter word, but hold your tongue, and remember “Christ died for the ungodly.” Make this henceforth the message of your life—“Christ died for the ungodly.”

And, oh, dear friends, you that are not saved, take care that you receive this message. Believe it. Go to God with this on your tongue—“Lord save me, for Christ died for the ungodly, and I am of them.” Fling yourself right on to this as a man commits himself to his life-belt amid the surging billows. “But I do not feel,” says one. Trust not your feelings if you do; but with no feelings and no hopes of your own, cling desperately to this, “Christ died for the ungodly.” The transforming, elevating, spiritualising, moralising, sanctifying power of this great fact you shall soon know and be no more ungodly; but first, as ungodly, rest you on this, “Christ died for the ungodly.” Accept this truth, my dear hearer, and you are saved. I do not mean merely that you will be pardoned, I do not mean that you will enter heaven, I mean much more; I mean that you will have a new heart; you will be saved from the love of sin, saved from drunkenness, saved from uncleanness, saved from blasphemy, saved from dishonesty. “Christ died for the ungodly”—if that be really known and trusted in, it will open in your soul new springs of living water which will cleanse the Augean stable of your nature, and make a temple of God

of that which was before a den of thieves. Trust in the mercy of God through the death of Jesus Christ, and a new era in your life's history will at once commence.

Having put this as plainly as I know how, and having guarded my speech to prevent there being anything like a flowery sentence, having tried to put this as clearly as daylight itself,—that “Christ died for the ungodly,” if your ears refuse the precious boons that come through the dying Christ, your blood be on your own heads, for there is no other way of salvation for any one among you. Whether you accept or reject this, I am clear. But oh! do not reject it, for it is your life. If the Son of God dies for sinners, and sinners reject his blood, they have committed the most heinous offence possible. I will not venture to affirm, but I do suggest that the devils in hell are not capable of such great a stretch of criminality as is involved in the rejection of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Here lies the highest love. The incarnate God bleeds to death to save men, and men hate God so much that they will not even have him as he dies to save them. They will not be reconciled to their Creator, though he stoops from his loftiness to the depths of woe in the person of his Son on their behalf. This is deep indeed, and desperateness of rebellion. God grant you may not be guilty of it. There can be no fiercer flame of wrath than that which will be kindled forth from love that has been trampled upon, when men have put off eternal life, and done despite to the Lamb of God. “Oh,” says one, “would God I could believe!” “Sir, what difficulty is there in it? Is it hard to believe the truth? Darest thou believe in God? Art thou steeling thy heart to such desperateness that thou wilt call thy God a liar?” “No; I believe Christ died for the ungodly,” says one, “but I want to know how to get the mercy of that death applied to my own soul.” Thou mayest, then, for he that is—“He that believeth in him,” that is, he that trusts in him—“shall not be condemned.” Here is the gospel and the whole of it—“He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned.”

I am but a poor weak man like yourselves, but my gospel is as strong as ever; and it would be no stronger if one of “the mailed cherubim or sworded seraphim” could take the platform and stand here in my stead. He could tell to you no better news. God, in condescension to your weakness, has chosen one of your fellow mortals to be the messenger of this message of infinite affection. Do not reject it! By the value of your souls, by their immortality, by the hope of heaven and by the dread of hell, lay hold upon eternal life; and by the fear that this may be your last day on earth, yea, and this evening your last hour, beseech you now, “steal away to Jesus.” There is life in a loaf of bread; there is life in a crucified one; there is life at this moment for you. Look to it now and live. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ezekiel xvi. 1-11.
Romans v. 1-11.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—174, 502 (v. 4, 5, 6).

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

HINDRANCES TO PRAYER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 13TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"That your prayers be not hindered."—1 Peter iii. 7.

To many persons this discourse will have but little reference, because they do not pray. I fear, also, there are some others whose prayers are so worthless that if they were hindered it would be of no very material consequence; it is even possible that their being forced to omit them might arouse them out of a self-righteous lethargy. Merely to bow the knee in formality, to go through a form of devotion in a careless or half-hearted manner is rather to mock God than to worship him. It would be a terrible theme for contemplation to consider how much of vain repetition and heartless prayer-saying the Lord is wearied with from day to day. I would, however, most solemnly remind those who do not truly pray that the wrath of God abideth on them. He who never seeks for mercy has certainly never found it. Conscience acknowledges it to be a righteous thing with God that he should not give to those who will not ask. It is the smallest thing that can be expected of us that we should humbly ask for the favours we need; and if we refuse to do so, it is but right that the door of grace should be closed so long as men refuse to knock. Prayer is no hard requirement, it is the natural duty of a creature to its creator, the simplest homage which human want can pay to divine liberality, and those who refuse to render it may well expect that one of these days when in dire extremity they begin to bemoan their folly, they will hear a voice from their insulted God, saying, "I called and ye refused; I stretched out my hands and no man regarded; therefore I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh." The old story tells of a monarch who gave to a favourite courtier a ring which he might send to her in case he should be under her displeasure, promising that at the sight thereof he should be restored to favour. That ring was never shown, though long waited for, and it was little wonder that, concluding the offender to be stubbornly rebellious, the

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sentence of execution was carried out. If a sinner will not plead the name of Jesus to which the promise of forgiveness is appended, if he will not bend his knee in penitential prayer, and ask for pardon at the hand of God, none will wonder that he perishes for his folly. None will be able to accuse the Lord of too great severity when he casts away for ever all prayerless souls. O you who never pray, I tremble for you! Would to God you would tremble for yourselves, for there is cause enough for it.

To those who do pray, prayer is a most precious thing, for it is the channel by which priceless blessings come to them, the window through which their needs are supplied by a gracious God. To believers prayer is the great means of soul enrichment—it is the vessel which trades with heaven, and comes home from the celestial country laden with treasures of far greater worth than ever Spanish galleon brought from the land of gold. Indeed, to true believers prayer is so invaluable that the danger of hindering it is used by Peter as a motive why, in their marriage relationships, and household concerns, they should behave themselves with great wisdom. He bids the husband “dwell” with his wife “according to knowledge,” and render loving honour to her, lest their united prayers should be hindered. Anything which hinders prayer must be wrong. If any management of the family, or want of management, is injuring our power in prayer, there is an urgent demand for an alteration. Husband and wife should pray together, as jointly heirs of grace, and any temper or habit which hinders this is evil.

The text would be most appropriately used to stimulate Christians to diligence in family prayer, and though I shall not so use it on this occasion, it is not because I undervalue the institution, for I esteem it so highly that no language of mine can adequately express my sense of its value. The house in which there is no family altar can scarcely expect the divine blessing. If the Lord do not cover our habitation with his wings our family is like a house without a roof; if we do not seek the Lord's guidance our household is a ship without a pilot; and unless guarded by devotion our family will be a field without a hedge. The mournful behaviour of many of the children of professing parents is mainly due to the neglect or the coldness of family worship; and many a judgment has, I doubt not, fallen upon households because the Lord is not duly honoured therein. Eli's sin still brings with it the visitations of a jealous God. That word of Jeremiah bears hard upon prayerless families, “Pour out thy fury upon the households that call not upon thy name.” His mercy visits every house where night and morning vows are paid, but where these are neglected sin is incurred. In the good old Puritan times it was said, that if you had walked down Cheapside you would have heard in every house the voice of a psalm at a certain hour of the morning and evening, for there was no house then of professed Christians without family prayer. I believe that the bulwark of Protestantism against Popery is family worship. Take that away, and give over the instruction of children in the fear of God, and you lay this country open again to the theory that prayer is most acceptable in the parish church, and you get into the sacredness of places: then taking away the priest-

hood from the father of the family, who ought to be the priest in his own house, you make a vacancy for a superstitious priesthood, and, leaving the teaching with these pretenders, mischiefs innumerable are introduced. If neglect of family prayer should become general throughout our churches it will be a dark day for England. Children who observe that their parents are practically prayerless in the household will grow up indifferent to religion, and in many cases will be utter worldlings, if not altogether atheists. This is a matter about which the church cannot make any inquisitorial inquiry; it must be left to the good sense and the Christian spirit of the heads of households, and I therefore speak all the more strongly, and pray you so to order things at home that family prayer be not hindered. At this time, however, I shall use the text for another purpose, and apply it to the hindrances which beset private prayer.

Our prayers may be hindered thus—first, we may be hindered *from* prayer; secondly, we may be hindered *in* prayer; and, thirdly, we may be hindered *from our prayers speeding with God*.

I. First, there is such a thing as being HINDERED FROM PRAYER: and that may be done *by falling into a generally lax, lukewarm condition in reference to the things of God*. When a man becomes cold, indifferent, and careless, one of the first things that will suffer will be his devotion. When a sick man is in a decline his lungs suffer and his voice; and so when a Christian is in a spiritual decline the breath of prayer is affected, and the cry of supplication becomes weak. Prayer is the true gauge of spiritual power. To restrain prayer is dangerous, and of deadly tendency. You may depend upon it that, take it for all in all, what you are upon your knees you are really before your God. What the Pharisee and the Publican were in prayer was the true criterion of their spiritual state. You may maintain a decent reputation among men, but it is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, for men see only the surface, while the Lord's eyes pry into the recesses of the soul. If he sees that you are prayerless he makes small account of your attendance at religious meetings, or your loud professions of conversion. If you are a man of earnest prayer, and especially if the spirit of prayer be in you, so that in addition to certain seasons of supplication your heart habitually talks with God, things are right with you; but if this be not the case, and your prayers be "hindered," there is something in your spiritual system which needs to be ejected, or somewhat lacking which ought at once to be supplied. "Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life;" and living prayers are among those issues.

Prayers may be hindered, next, *by having too much to do*. In this age this is a very common occurrence. We may have too much business for ourselves. The quiet days of our contented forefathers are gone, and men allot to themselves an increasing drudgery; not content to earn as much as is necessary for themselves and families, they must have much more than they can possibly enjoy for themselves, or profitably use for others. Wisdom seems to say that one staff is enough for a man to walk with, but ambition cannot be contented unless it carries a load of staves upon its back. "Enough is as good as a feast," said the old proverb, but now-a-days neither enough nor a feast will satisfy

men ; they must needs accumulate more than would feast thousands of families before they can be content—ay, they are not content then. Many a man who might have been of great service to the church of God becomes useless because he must branch out in some new direction in business, which takes up all his spare time. Instead of feeling that his first care should be, "How can I best glorify God?" his all-absorbing object is to "stretch his arms like seas and grasp in all the shore." Thousands, hundreds of thousands, and even millions of pounds cannot silence the greedy horseleech which men have swallowed, which continually cries, "Give, give." Many add house to house, and field to field, as though they meant to be left alone in the land ; alas, that Christians should be infected with the same fever. The rich man in the parable had no time for prayer, for he was busy in planning new barns wherein to bestow his goods, but he had to find time for dying when the Lord said, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee." Beware, I pray you, of "the desire of other things," the canker of riches, the greed insatiable which drives men into the snare of the devil ; for if it works you no other ill, it will do you mischief enough if thereby your prayers are hindered.

We may even have too much to do in God's house, and so hinder our prayers, by being like Martha, cumbered with much serving. I never heard of any one who was cumbered with much praying. The more we do the more we should pray, and prayer should balance our service, or rather, it should be the life-blood of every action, and saturate our entire life, as the dew of heaven filled Gideon's fleece. We cannot labour too much if prayer be proportionate, but I fear that some of us would do far more if we attempted less and prayed more about it. I even fear that some allow public religious engagements to override private communion with God : they attend too many sermons, too many conferences, too many Bible readings, too many committees, aye, and too many prayer-meetings—all good in their way, but all acting injuriously when they cramp our secret prayer. Mrs. Row said that if the apostles were preaching at her time for private communion with God she would not forsake her closet to go and hear them. It must be better to be with God than with Peter or Paul. Praying is the end of preaching, and woe to the man who, prizing the means more than the end, allows any other form of service to push his prayers into a corner.

There can be no doubt, also, that prayer is hindered *by having too little to do*. If you want a thing well done, you must go to the man who has a great deal to do, for he is the man to do it for you. People who have nothing to do generally do it with a great deal of fuss. From morning to night they waste other people's time,—they are the callers, the interviewers, the people who write catching paragraphs about public men, very frequently invented in their own silly pates. These are the propagators of slander, who in very wantonness spit upon good men's characters. Having nothing to do they are hired by Satan to hinder and injure others. If such people ever do pray, I am sure their indolence must hinder them much. The man who has to teach in the ragged school finds he must cry for help to master those young natures ; the young lady who has around her a dozen girls

whom she longs to bring to the Saviour feels it imperative upon her to pray for Jane and Ellen, that they may be converted to God; the minister, whose hands are full of holy toil and whose eyes fail with sacred watching, finds he cannot do without drawing nigh unto his God. If these servants of Jesus had less to do they would pray less, but holy industry is the nurse of devotion.

I said we might do too much, and I could not balance that truth unless I added that a very large proportion of Christians do too little. God has given them enough wealth to be able to retire from business; they have time upon their hands, and they have even to invent ways of spending that time, and yet the ignorant require instructing, the sick want visiting, the poor need helping; should they not lay out their abundant leisure in the service of God? Would they not then be quickened in prayer? I wish that all could say with one of the Lord's saints, "Prayer is my business and praise is my pleasure"; but I am sure they never will till the zeal of the Lord's house shall more fully consume them.

Some people hinder their prayers, again, *by a want of order*. They get up a little too late, and they have to chase their work all the day and never overtake it, but are always in a flurry, one duty tripping up the heels of another. They have no appointed time for retirement, no little space hedged about for communion with God; and, consequently, something or other happens, and prayer is forgotten,—nay, I hope not quite forgotten, but so slurred and hurried over that it amounts to little and brings them no blessing. I wish you would each keep a diary of how you pray next week, and see how much, or rather how little time you spend with God out of the twenty-four hours. Much time goes at the table, how much at the mercy-seat? Many hours are spent with men, how many with your Maker? You are somewhat with your friends on earth, how many minutes are you with your Friend in heaven? You allow yourself space for recreation, what do you set apart for those exercises which in very truth re-create the soul? "A place for everything, and everything in its place," is a good rule for schools and houses of business, and it will be equally useful in spirituals; other duties should be done, but prayer must not be left undone, it must have its own place and sufficient of it. Care must be taken that our "prayers be not hindered," so that we omit or abridge them. But time compels me to leave this wide subject and proceed.

II. Secondly, we must watch that we be not **HINDERED IN PRAYER**, when we are really engaged in that holy work. Here I might go over the same ground as before, and remark that some are hindered while in their prayers by being lax and lukewarm—a great hindrance; others by having too much or too little to do, and another class by being in that flurried condition of heart, which results from a want of order; but I need not repeat myself when you are so eagerly drinking in my words.

Let us note that some are hindered in prayer *by selecting an unfit time and place*. There are times when you may expect a knock at your own door, do not just then knock at God's door. There are hours when your letters arrive, when customers call in, when trades-

people need attention, when workmen want orders, and it would be foolish to be going into your closet just then. If you are employed by others, you must not present to God those hours which belong to your master; you will be honouring the Lord better by diligence in your calling. There are times that are demanded of you by the necessities of the household and your lawful calling; these are already the Lord's in another way, let them be used for their own purpose. Never defile one duty with the blood of another. Give to God and prayer those suitable times in which you can reasonably expect to be alone. Of course you can pray at your work, in ejaculations and silent groanings, and you ought to be in the spirit of supplication all the day long, but I am alluding now to times specially devoted to supplication, and I say choose a season and a place where you can be free from interruption. A pious lad who had no place at home to pray in, went to the stable and climbed up into the hay-loft; but very soon some one came up the ladder and interrupted him: the next time he took care to pull the ladder up after him, a very useful hint for us. It would be well indeed if we could so completely pull the ladder up that neither the devil nor the world could invade our sacred privacy. "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Select, then, the fittest time and place, that your prayers be not hindered.

Worldly cares are frequent and most mischievous hindrances to prayer. A Christian man should be the most careful man in the world, and yet without carefulness. Understand ye that paradox? He should be careful not to sin, but as for other matters, he should cast his care on "him who careth for him." To take everything from God's hands, and to trust everything in God's hands, is a happy way of living, and very helpful to prayer. Has not your Master told you of the ravens and the lilies? Your heavenly Father feedeth and clotheth them, and will he not clothe you? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Faith gives peace, and peace leaves the soul clear for prayer; but when care comes in, it confuses the mind, and puts the heart away from pleading. A heart clogged with care is like a man trying to swim with heavy clothes upon him, he must get them off if he hopes to swim to shore. Many a sailor has cut his clothes to pieces, because he felt he should sink if he did not get clear of them. I could wish that many Christians would tear themselves away from their excessive worldly engagements, for they have such a mass of care upon them that they scarcely keep their heads above water. Oh, for more grace and less worry! More praying and less hoarding! More intercession and less speculating! As it is, prayers are sadly hindered.

Earthly pleasures, especially of a dubious kind, are the worst of hindrances. Some professors indulge in amusements which I am sure are not consistent with prayer. They resemble flies which plunge into the honey, until the sweet sticks to their wings and legs and they cannot fly. I once remember reading "A prayer to be said by a Christian man after coming home from a theatre," "A collect for a saint on returning from the races," and "A prayer for a Christian

on returning from a ball." Of course they were written sarcastically, and were indeed a broad farce. How can you come home from folly and sin and then look into the face of Jesus? How can the passions of the world be followed, and communion with God be maintained? You cannot roll in the mire and then approach with clean garments to the mercy-seat. How can you come before the throne of God with petitions when you have just been dishonouring the name of Most High? O Christians! keep yourselves from everything at which you have any doubt as to its rightness or even its expediency, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin, and will hinder your prayers.

Further, prayers may be hindered equally much by *worldly sorrow*. We give way to sorrow so extremely that they cannot even pray. The rage of rebellious repining damps the powder of prayer, so that a Christian man cannot send his desires heavenward as he should. The rage which prevents a man's praying is flat rebellion against the will of God. Our Lord was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," but in he prayed; nay, "therefore he prayed." It is right to be sorrowful, for God intends that affliction should be grievous, and not joyous; when sorrow is right it will drive us to prayer, and not drive us from it; and when we find our grief at the loss of some dear child, or the decay of our property, hinders our prayers, I think we should say to ourselves, "Now I must pray; for it must be wrong for me to be so rebellious against my Father as to refuse to ask anything at his hands." You would think your child in a very sullen temper if, because he could not have his own way, he would refuse to ask anything of you whatever, or went about the house pouting at you; yet many mourners act in this fashion. We would deeply sympathise with their sorrow, but may not excuse their repining; for the "sorrow of the world is as death," and is unfitting in a child of God. With all your grief, bowed into the very dust by affliction, still like your Lord and Master, cry, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt," and then your prayers will be helped, and not hindered.

There are cases in which prayer is very greatly hindered by *bad temper*. I do not know where this may apply, but, wherever it does, I trust that it will go home. You cannot speak sharp habitually to servants and children, you cannot put yourself into pets, you cannot be in a grand row or in small squabbles, and then go and pray with fervour. I cannot speed in prayer if I feel anger in my heart, and I do not believe that you can. Get up and go and settle the matter before you try to talk with God, for the prayer of angry men makes God angry. You cannot wrestle with the angel while you are under the power of the devil. I appeal to your own consciences—you yourselves will be judges—is it not so? That was good advice on our Lord's part. "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go and be reconciled to thy brother." If that be not done, the sacrifice will not be accepted, nor do I see how you can dare to offer it. I have heard of two good men who had a sharp difference with each other in business. I do not know which was to blame—perhaps neither of them; they might have misunderstood each other; but one of them as he walked home, very much ruffled, saw the sun

going down, and the passage occurred to him, "Let not the down upon thy wrath." He thought, "I will go back and make an apology, for I believe I have spoken much too strongly." He went back towards his friend's office, and half way he met the other to him on the same errand. Happy Christians to be both so obedient to the Holy Spirit's teaching, and so like the Lord Jesus! It needs be that offences come, but blessed are those who are for removing them. Alas, men of a certain mould cannot do this, keep a grudge till it rots, and fills their whole nature with odours; surely they cannot expect to be heard in prayer with unburi ed enmities pollute their souls. Do endeavour, dear friends, as much as you can, whenever you are angry, not to be angry, for it is written, "Be ye angry and sin not." A man who has no anger in him is scarcely a man, and certainly not a god; for he who is not angry at sin is not in love with virtue. It is of some that they are as easy as an old shoe, and they are worth no more than that article. Anger against injustice is right, but that anger against the person which degenerates into wishing evil is sinful, and effectually blows out the fires of prayer. We cannot have forgiveness unless we forgive the trespasses of others again. Prayer can be hindered—very terribly hindered—in three ways: we dishonour the Father to whom we pray, or the Son through whom we pray, or the Holy Ghost by whom we pray.

I say we can dishonour the Father. This can be done by the unholiness of life: if children of God are not obedient to the Father, they must not wonder if they find it hard to pray. Sometimes a lump rises in the throat that will choke their pleading. You cannot get out your heart acceptably unless you believe in your heavenly Father. If you have hard thoughts of God; if you have a cold heart towards him, and a want of reverence for his name; if you do not have that great willing heart which is waiting to bless you, your love, faith, and reverence will strangle your prayers. Oh! when we are fully at one with the great Father; when "Abba, Father," is the cry of his spirit; when he speaks to God as one in very truth, and places implicit trust and to whose will he yields himself up; and whose glory is his soul's delight—then is he on a vantage ground in prayer, he will win what he wills of God. If he be not so, his prayers will limp most painfully.

So, brethren, if we be wrong with Jesus through whom we pray, we are in any measure self-righteous, if we delight in self and not in our Beloved, if we fancy that we can do without the Saviour, if we pray like complacent Pharisees, our prayers will be hindered. If we are not like the Saviour; if we do not make him our example; if we have none of his loving spirit; above all, if we crucify him and put him to an open shame, and if we are ungrateful for the love we have already received, our prayers will be hindered. You cannot plead in the court if you have quarrelled with your Advocate. Your prayer will not be taken in hand by the great Intercessor, and if he does not pray for you, by him on your behalf, you will have no heart for the sacred presence of God.

So, again, with the Holy Ghost. There is never a prayer accepted but the Spirit first writes it in our hearts. True prayer

much our intercession as the Spirit of God making intercession in us. Now, if we grieve the Spirit, he will not help us to pray; and if we attempt to pray for something that is contrary to the Spirit's holy, precious, loving nature, we cannot expect him to enable us to pray in contradiction to the mind of God. Take care that you vex not the Spirit of God in any way, especially by shutting your ears to his gentle warnings, his loving calls, his earnest entreaties, his tender monitions; if you be deaf to the divine Comforter he will be speechless to you. He will not help you to pray if you will not yield to him in other matters.

So then, dear friends, I have stated to you in a hurried manner one of the ways in which prayer may be hindered. May God grant that none of us may be overcome by them, but may we be delivered from everything which could mar our petitions!

III. I shall now want your earnest attention to the most important of all, upon which I shall endeavour to be brief. We may be hindered in the speeding of our prayers. We may pray, but the prayer may not be heard. And here let me interpose a remark. The Lord will hear any man's prayer who asks for mercy through the mediation of the Lord Jesus. He never despises the cry of the contrite, he is a God ready to hear all those who seek reconciliation; but concerning other matters it is true that God heareth not sinners—that is, while they remain sinners he will not grant them their wishes—indeed, he would so encourage them in their sins. If they will repent and ask for mercy through Jesus Christ he will hear their cry, and will save them; but if they are not first reconciled to him their prayers are empty wind. A man will grant his child's request, but he does not listen to strangers; he will listen to his friends, but not to enemies. It is not meet that the golden key which opens the caskets of heaven should be hung at a rebel's girdle. Yet more, God does not hear all children alike, or alike at all times. It is not every believer who is mighty in prayer. Read the Ninety-ninth Psalm, and, if I remember rightly, you will find words like these: "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called on the Lord and he answered them. They kept his testimonies, and the ordinances that he gave them." Yes; he answered *them*—Moses, Aaron, Samuel—he answered them, for they kept his testimonies. When children of God find that their prayers do not succeed they should search, and they would soon discover a reason why their prayers are hindered.

First, there must be *holy living* in a believer if his prayers are likely to succeed with God. Listen: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Note that point—*of a righteous man*. Listen to our Saviour (John xv. 7): "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." There is an *if* there. If you do not do Christ's will he will not do your will. This is not legal, it has nothing to do with the law, but it is the golden rule of Christ's house that obedience should have for its reward in prayer. Just as you do with your children; you have a discipline over them; you do not turn them out of doors or give them a ticket to the policeman because they do amiss, but you have ways of

chastening the wilful and rewarding the obedient. You are in no hurry to grant the requests of yonder fractious boy, in fact you deny him his request; but that other dear, gentle, loving child has only to ask and have. This is correct discipline, and such as God exercises among us. He does not cast off his children for sin, and utterly disown them, but he chastens them in love, and one of his chastenings lies in shutting out their prayers. If we compare prayer to shooting with a bow, you must have clean hands or you cannot shoot, for this bow refuses to bend to hands polluted with unrepented sin. If a sinner prays for mercy for Jesus' sake he shall be heard, but for general blessings it is written, "The desire of the righteous shall be granted," but not the desire of the wicked. First wash in the fountain of atoning grace, and have your heart cleansed by the Holy Spirit, for else you cannot succeed in prayer. If any one should tell me of a man whom God greatly answered in prayer, and then inform me that he lived in gross sin, I would not believe it. It is impossible for God to patronise a guilty professor of religion by giving him success in prayer. The blind man whom Jesus healed most truly said, "If any man doeth his will, him he heareth."

In addition to obedience there must be *faith*. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed: let not that man expect that he shall receive anything of the Lord." Faith "obtains promises, unbelief goes empty-handed." The Lord may give a blessing to a doubter, but that is more than the promise, and he has no right to expect it. The prayer which avails most with God is the prayer of one who believes that God will hear him, and who therefore asks with confidence. In a word, faith is the bow of prayer. You must lay hold on the bow, or you cannot shoot, and the stronger that bow the further you can send the arrow, and the more execution you can do with it. Without faith it is impossible to please God in prayer or in anything else; it is the very backbone, sinew, and muscle of intercession.

Thirdly, there must be *holy desires*, or else prayer will be a failure; and those desires must be founded on a promise. If you cannot find that God has promised a blessing, you have no right to ask for it, and no reason to expect it. There is no use in asking money of a banker without a cheque: at the counter they do not know you; they know the promise to pay, and if you present that you will get the amount, but not else. You must bring God's own promises to the mercy-seat, which is the counter of the divine exchequer, and you will obtain what you need, but only in that way. Observe, then, that faith is the bow, and strong desire fits to the string the arrow which is to be sent

upward. No arrow may be shot towards heaven but that which came down from heaven. Christians take their arrows from God's quiver, and when they shoot them they shoot them with this on their lips, "Do as thou hast said. Remember thy word unto thy servant upon which thou hast caused me to hope." So the successful prayer is the desire of a holy heart, sanctioned by the promise. True prayers are like those carrier pigeons which find their way so well; they cannot fail to go to heaven, for it is from heaven that they came; they are only going home.

Furthermore; if prayer is to speed, there must be *fervour and importunity*. It is written, "The effectual *servent* prayer of the righteous man availeth much;" not the dead-and-alive prayer of the mere professor,—not the prayer of one who does not care whether he is answered or not. There must be eagerness, intensity, the pouring out of the heart before God. The arrow must be put on the bow string, and the bow must be drawn with all our might. The best bow is of no use until you draw it, and if you draw the bow of faith and shoot at the target up there in heaven, you will get what you will; only you *must resolve to have it* with this only boundary—"the will of the Lord be done"—and you will succeed.

There must be, next, a *desire for God's glory*—for that is the white of the target—and if we do not shoot towards that, the arrow will avail nothing. We must earnestly desire what we ask, because we believe it will glorify God to give it to us. If we are wholly living unto God, our prayers will run side by side with his purposes, and none of them will fall to the ground. "Delight thyself also in the Lord and he will give thee the desires of thine heart."

We must also have *holy expectancy*, or we shall hinder prayer. The man who shoots must look to see where his arrow goes. We must direct our prayer unto God, and look up. Eyeing the Lord Jesus in all, we must look to succeed through the merits of the Redeemer. "If we believe that he heareth us, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of him."

Presumption in prayer shoots with the bow of self-confidence, not for God's glory, but for the gratification of itself, and therefore it fails. Some have the idea that, ask what they like of God, they are sure to have it: but I would ask them, first, "Who are you?" secondly, "What is it you are going to ask?" and, thirdly, "What right have you to expect it?" These inquiries must be clearly answered, otherwise prayer may be an insult to God. I wish some Christians who pray about temporals would be a little careful as to how they act. When they get into scrapes and messes by extravagance do they expect God to get them out? I remember hearing of a remark of good Mr. Muller, of Bristol. At a prayer meeting he read a letter from a

brother who thanked him for a gift of some twenty pounds, which had arrived very providentially, for he owed half a year's rent. Mr. Muller remarked, "Yes, our brother should be very thankful; but I intend to write to him and tell him he ought not to owe half a year's rent without being prepared to pay; and he is acting unwisely and unjustly by not laying by in store to meet the claim. When I took a house I said, 'This is another person's house; I am bound to pay his rent,' and therefore week by week as I used the house I put by a portion to pay what was due. I did not spend the money and at the end of the quarter expect the heavenly Father to send me more." This was sound morality and common sense, and I pray you attend to it. Pray by all means, but "owe no man anything." Daily bread is to be prayed for, but speculations which may involve you in ruin, or make your fortune, are not to be mentioned. If you take to gambling you may as well give up praying. Straightforward transactions you may pray about, but do not mix up the Lord with your financing.

I am requested to pray for a young man who has lost his situation, through a defalcation, that he may get another place, but instead of doing so I suggest that he should himself pray to be made honest. Another who is deeply in debt wants me to pray that he may obtain help, but I suggest that he should let his creditors have a dividend while there is anything left. I shall not ask of my God what I would not ask of man. The approach to the mercy-seat is holy ground and not to be trifled with, or made to minister to sin. "Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." If we walk contrary to the Lord he will walk contrary to us; and I say to every man here who is in trouble and is a Christian, take the straight path out of it, and do the right thing, and if it brings you trouble bear it like a man, and then go to God, and say, "Lord, I have, by thy grace, chosen a plain, honest path; now help me;" and he will.

God grant us grace as Christians to walk with God in the power of his Spirit, resting alone on Jesus, and may he make each one of us mighty in prayer. A man, whom God has taught to pray mightily, is one with God's mind, and is God's hand moving among the sons of men; when he acts, God acts in him. He must, however, be careful and watchful, for the Lord is a jealous God, and most jealous where he loves most. God grant you, brethren, to walk humbly with God, and to live near to him, "that your prayers be not hindered." Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Malachi iii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—84 (Song III.), 1001, 994.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GIRDING ON THE HARNESS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 6TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off."—1 Kings xx. 11.

THESE two kings were about to proceed to war, and they irritated one another by insulting messages. That was the custom of all combatants in the old heathenish times. They seemed to delight in stinging each other and exciting each other's worst passions before they commenced the battle. Let it not be so among us. If we have to contend for the truth let us endeavour to do it in the kindest spirit; and if we must smite, let it always be with the iron rod of truth held in the hand of love, wounding none, nor exulting over them, but breaking in pieces their errors and their sins by the help of God. The blow will be none the weaker for being divested of anything like an evil spirit and an ungenerous temper. Speak the truth firmly, and contend earnestly for it, but never manifest a bitter spirit; bring up the weightiest arguments you can find, but let them be accompanied with courtesy and kindness, for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God, and it is ill for a Christian soldier to imitate the manners of the heathen.

However insultingly intended, the text we have quoted contained a great deal of common sense; it is, in fact, a proverb of the wise, and we intend so to use it. It is right to learn, even from the lips of the wicked, for they are seldom so foolish in worldly things as they are in spirituals. Professing Christians might learn much from the children of darkness if they would take the trouble to do so, for are they not in their generation wiser than the children of light? Our text was the utterance of Ahab, who was one of the vilest kings of Israel, and greatly provoked the Lord to anger; still, what he said has wisdom in it, and let us try to profit by it. Do you not remember how the Israelites of old went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his coultter and his axe? It is good to make our enemy turn the grindstone on which we may sharpen the weapons which we intend to use against him. The

expressions used by a godless man may be taken from his mouth and washed, and carefully cleansed of the sand of sin, and what remains of golden grains may be turned to good account. Full many a pearl has been discovered in an oyster-shell on the dark sea-bottom: throw away the shell, but keep the pearl. On a dunghill a diamond sometimes has been picked up; it is not to be rejected because of the place where it lay.

The text is peculiarly adapted to those who are commencing the battle of the Christian life. The young man who is newly converted is girding on his harness. He has newly made the profession of his faith; and has come forward to be baptised and united with the church: he is girding on his harness, and anon he is going back to the warehouse where they will know that he professes to be a Christian, or he will go home to a family whose other members have no respect for the things of God, and he will have to bear witness among them. The young woman has to go back to her friends who have not the same love to Jesus that she has, to commence her lifelong testimony in their midst. You are girding on the harness, then, dear young friends, and the text is for you—"Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." It will do also for young men and women who are commencing life for themselves, lately married, beginning housekeeping and intending to do so well; opening the new shop with such fair prospects; moving to the new farm with such bright hopes. It may be a word in season to such. Girding on the harness, you have not put it off yet, and therefore do not boast. It will do for my new students who have just come to college. May they be preserved from the tendency to boast, which is natural enough, and is as silly as it is natural. Perhaps I address some young minister who is commencing his ministry, or some worker for Christ who has begun in the Sabbath school, or taken a district for distributing tracts, or entered upon some other new labour. There are many other things which I need not mention here, but which each one can think of for himself, more especially if he happens to be in the condition intended. "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off."

I. Let us think a little upon this ancient saying, and remember, first, that THERE IS IN THOSE WHO NEWLY PUT ON THEIR ARMOUR A GREAT TENDENCY TO BOAST.

This is not at all remarkable, because, first, *it is the nature of all men more or less to boast.* Human nature is both poor and proud. It is so poor that it is naked and miserable; and yet it is so proud that it claims to be rich, and increased in goods, and to have need of nothing. If men carried their heads where they should, they would not be among the stars, but down in the dust; yet the less goodness poor mortals have, the more pride they usually manifest. The Pharisee who has been making a meal of a widow's house opens his mouth while yet he is gorged with his robbery, and cries, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men;" and Herod, who has been murdering a holy apostle and ought to be repenting of his great wickedness, assumes the god, and listens with delight to the flatteries of his foolish subjects. The poorer generally the prouder, and those who have the least to boast of are those who brag the most. Now, this propensity in human

nature to boast is sure to come out if we get a little preferment. We are about to be church members! Is not that something? Is it not a grand matter to be numbered with the people of God? Are we not somebody now? We shall come to the communion table, and be regarded as children of God; is not that delightful? We have sat up in the gallery and often envied the communicants when we have seen them gathered at the table, but now we shall sit among them, and the devil whispers, "Ah, now we are somebody." We have commenced to teach in the Sabbath school, and we feel pleased to think we are to be teachers of the young: is it not a noble work? Nobody will be able to say now that we are mere babes in grace. Why, we are getting to be quite defenders of the faith and bold servants of Christ; surely we may be allowed a little self-respect! If we have begun to preach, and have been praised by many of our hearers, it is probable that we scarcely know whether we are in the body or out of it, we think we are Whitfields already, and apostles in embryo. What preachers we are going to be, and what wonders we shall certainly accomplish! Satan has patted us with his black paw, and told us that we have done amazingly well and deserve great credit, and we fully believe him. It is well known that even in natural things Jack in office is apt to be proud; and the like thing will occur even to good young men when they are put a little forward. They can scarcely be trusted even to open the door of the Lord's house, or to sweep a crossing in the streets of the New Jerusalem, but straightway they become important. It is much easier to be puffed up than to be built up, much easier to grow in self-conceit than in vital godliness; a little advancement turns many brains. Baruch was employed by the prophet to write the roll, and straightway he had high ideas of what Baruch must be, and he needed the message, "Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." We are always up in the air unless God in his infinite mercy chains us down to the rock and keeps us there, for pride is like the eagle, and delights to soar on high.

Those who gird on the harness are the more apt to be proud, because they often mistake their intentions for accomplishments. Sitting down, they meditate upon what they hope to be—everything that is devout, humble, faithful, bold, tender, disinterested, pure, and holy; and after they have made a fair concoction of what ought to be done, and what they trust will be done, a gentle steam arises from the distillation of their thoughts, which intoxicates the brain, and they dream that what they purpose to be they already are. "Dear me, what a good fellow I am!" says the man who dreams that he is all that he hopes to be. He has put on his harness, and he hardly knows whether it fits him yet, but he has already killed hosts of enemies; he can see them lying heaps upon heaps, and there is he all stained with blood, fighting on, conquering and to conquer: though as yet he has not even fleshed his sword. He knows he shall be victorious to the end, and he already hears it said, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." But, young friend, there is a difference, and more than a slight one, between intentions and accomplishments. We do not always perform what we think we shall, nor do we always reach where we hope to arrive. Failures are as numerous as successes, and even the

most successful have failures to mourn over. Good intentions are not so rare that you may begin to crow about them; there is a road which is paved with them, but I would not have you travel it.

It sometimes happens to the young beginner that *he mistakes the formation of his ideal for the attainment of it*. He has sketched on paper the figure that is to be wrought out of the block of marble. There it is. Will not that make a beautiful statue? Already he congratulates himself that it stands before him on its pedestal. But it is a very different thing—the forming the idea in one's mind and the realising of it. Some of us would fain preach the gospel as simply, as earnestly, and with as seraphic a zeal as Bunyan, Baxter, or Brooks. Yes, it is a good ideal, and it is wise to have a grand model before you, but that is not all. He who aims high will shoot higher than he whose mark is low; but you have not struck that mark yet, young man; you are far short of your point; and, therefore, do not begin to glory as though you had attained the goal. You want to be a McCheyne. Very well, be a McCheyne if God makes you one, but do not boast of what you are going to be. You wish to reach a higher life. Young man, young woman, you desire to be as nearly perfect as may be possible. So be it! God help you and accomplish in you all the good pleasure of his will. But do not vainly dream that the life which you admire in others will readily be reproduced in yourself. Excellence comes of effort; they laboured and watched, and prayed, and trusted in the Lord, or they never would have become what they were, and be assured there is no royal road for you, you too must wrestle hard ere victory will be won. Let the ideal be before your mind, but remember it is but an ideal, and grace will be needed to work in you “to will and to do of the Lord's good pleasure.” To will is present with you even now, but perhaps ere long you will have to say, “How to perform that which I would I find not.”

Boasting in putting on the harness sometimes arises from the notion that we shall avoid the faults of others. We ought to do so, and we think we shall. We hear of a person who fell through becoming proud, and we feel sure that we shall keep humble, because we know the evil of pride. We hear of another man who was led astray by love of intoxicating drink, or another who fell a victim to his passions, or another who gave way to an evil temper, and so lost all his moral influence: now, having seen what others did, we feel that we are quite prepared to avoid the rocks on which they struck, and we already congratulate ourselves as if we had done so. If we were wise we should learn another lesson, and say humbly, “He fell yesterday, and I may fall to-day.” When I read of any minister turning aside to sin I feel a horror of great darkness come over my soul lest I should do the same; and many a time do I breathe the prayer to God that I may die and be gathered at once into heaven, sooner than be permitted to fall into any of those sins to which there is such a tendency in our corrupt nature. Instead of saying that I shall keep clear of grave sins, because another man will be my beacon, I ought rather to say, “that same current which drifted him upon the rock will drift *also*, unless the infinite mercy of God and the eternal power of *his* Spirit keep me from falling into the like catastrophe.” “Will

ye also go away?" is the plaintive question of our Lord, which every apostasy suggests to those who know themselves.

We also forget when we start in the battle of life that there is a great deal in novelty, and that novelty wears off. Believe me, you who have just begun, when you have been five and twenty years serving God you will learn that you have need of patience; and when you have been fifty years in it you will find that running in the race is not merely making a start and a spurt, but it is plodding on and on, through domestic troubles, through business cares, through the temptations of the flesh, through the machinations of Satan, fighting against the world, and contending against every passion of our nature. For all this we must make perpetual drafts upon divine strength, or we shall lose the day. If the days of martyrdom were to come, and the Papists would be kind enough to cut off our heads, I think I could go to Tower Hill and die without the slightest trepidation; but I tremble to think how I should behave if they were to roast me alive at a slow fire. To be a long while dying, with pains in the extremity of the body, hour after hour—that must be an awful test of faith. Now, if true religion consisted in a few days' resistance of temptation, that might readily enough be done; but to continue in your pilgrimage over hill and dale till you reach the Celestial City needs a resolute man, nay, needs his God, for without divine help he cannot possibly hold out. Putting on your harness, you feel how pleasant it is to have new Christian friends to encourage you, and warm-hearted brethren to help you over your first difficulties and troubles; but after a while these Christian friends will have others to attend to, they cannot always carry you like lambs in their bosoms, you will have to run alone, and journey along the road like the rest of the flock. You may live to think that the service which seemed so interesting and delightful is not quite so fascinating as you thought it. The work which is now surrounded with a halo of romance will sober down to stern reality, and then you will feel, if you boasted in putting on your harness, that you boasted a little too soon.

So much upon the first head; the fault we wish to cure is a very common one,—those who gird on the harness are very apt to boast.

II. Now for the second point, namely—THOSE WHO PUT ON THE HARNESS HAVE GOOD REASON TO REFRAIN FROM BOASTING.

They have good reason not to boast if they remember *what the very harness, or armour, itself is meant for*. What do you want armour for at all? Because you are weak; because you are in danger. When, then, you put on that casque with nodding plume, think to yourself, "It is because this head may be smitten with a deadly blow, that therefore I put on this helmet of salvation." When, through divine grace, you buckle on your breastplate of righteousness, think to yourself, "This poor heart of mine would soon be wounded with mortal sin if it were not for God's infinite love in providing me this cuirass of impenetrable metal." When you fit on those shoes with which your feet are to be shod, when you receive "the preparation of the gospel of peace," think to yourself, "What a feeble creature I am! Even a poor horn would lame me for my pilgrimage if God had not provided me with these protecting sandals." As you take each piece of the armour,

look at it, and say to yourself, "I cannot be proud, for my wanting this proves that I am a poor weak creature." It is always very foolish to be proud of our garments, because if we had not sinned we should have needed no clothes, and hence our garments are the ensigns of our sin, and so it would be equally absurd to be elated because we wear a suit of armour. Your armour, young man, though it glistens, and in the sunlight looks like burnished silver, affords you no ground for boasting, for if sin had not made you weak you would have required no armour whatsoever.

Again, it will be well to refrain from boasting, for *your harness which you are putting on is meant for use*. You are not dressing yourself out that you may be a thing of beauty, like a Life Guardsman in the park, or sit on horseback for show, like those heroes at the Horse Guards, for small country lads to look at, and wonder how such sublime things could have been produced. You put on your armour because a conflict is expected. That bright breastplate of yours will be dented and bruised; that helmet will be battered by the sabre of your foe. Every part of your harness will be tested and tried; it is bright now, but it will be rusted to-morrow with your own tears, and bespattered with the mire through which you will have to march. You could see yourself in it now if you took it off and gazed upon it, but other sights await you before you have ended the campaign. Worse than garments rolled in blood, and the smoke and dust of a martial conflict, will be the trials and troubles and temptations through which you will have to pass before you have ended your lifelong fight. How dare you boast, then? Surely you have something else to do than to glory in your harness, because that harness is meant for you to suffer and to labour in; and therefore get to your work, and get away from your pride.

You must not boast, again, because *if you look at your harness you will see that it has joints in it*. You think your armour fits so well, do you? Ah, so thought that man who, nevertheless, died by an arrow which found its way into his heart between the joints of his array. In every man among us there is some weak point—something in our character by which we may be destroyed, unless the grace of God shall protect us. Yes, it may be true you cannot be hurt in those parts which the armour covers, but just an inch to this side, or to that, lies a vulnerable place. We are always most in peril where we think ourselves most secure. The prayer we uttered just now in our song was one which ought to be always on our lips—

"Let us not fall! let us not fall;"

for fall we shall, even into those faults from which we think ourselves free, unless the sovereign grace of God shall perpetually uphold us.

You ought not to boast of your harness, because *there are suits of armour which are good for nothing*. There is armour about in the world, and some of it the brightest that was ever seen, which is utterly worthless. I have known young men put on that harness and come strutting into our ranks, but soon the enemy's sword has cut through their sham armour-plates, and they have perished from before the Lord. Oh, it is a grand thing to have on that coat of mail which is made by heaven's own artificers, made of that metal of proof which

laugheth at spear and battle-axe; but self-confidence is a counterfeit, and carnal presumption and rash heedlessness are worthless imitations and will not turn the edge of the sword in the day of battle.

We should not boast when we put on our armour, because, *after all, armour and weapons are of little use except to strong men.* The old coats of mail were so heavy that they needed a man of a strong constitution even to wear them, much more to fight in them. It was not the armour that was wanted so much as the strong man who could sit upright under the weight. Think, too, of the sword, the great two-handed sword which the old warriors used; we have looked at one, and said, "Is that the sword with which battles were won?" Yes, sir, but you want to see the arm which wielded it, or you see nothing. The young professor may put on that splendid harness; but is there vital godliness within his heart? Has he the life of God? Has he power with God? Is the real work of the Holy Ghost within his soul? For, if not, however excellent the external armour may seem to be, there will be a dreadful failure for want of force within.

Lastly, we may not boast in our harness, because if it be of the right sort, and if it be well jointed, yet *we have received it as a gift of charity.* Most valiant warrior, not one single ring of your mail is your own. O Sir Knight with the red cross, no part of your array belongs to you by any rights but those of free gift. The infinite charity of God has given you all you have. How, then, can you boast? What if the Lord has preserved us for years, and what if we are enabled to feel that he always will preserve us? Yet this is nothing for us to glory in; we must give all the glory to his holy name to whom all the glory belongs. Therefore let not him that girdeth on his harness dare to glory in himself, but let him glory only in the Lord.

III. But now the third point. HE WHO GIRDS ON HIS HARNESS HAS SOMETHING ELSE TO DO BESIDES BOASTING. Brave sir, just knighted and belted for the fight, waste no time in braggart speech! I will tell you what else you have to do. You have, first, to *see that you get all the pieces of your armour on.* Look ye well to it that ye "take to yourselves the whole armour of God," for one single part of that panoply neglected may lay you open to fatal blows. Open not your mouth to boast, but open your eyes, and look well to your way that you make sound work of it, for some begin with a false fire of carnal confidence which dies out to their disgrace. See to it, that you begin aright, and this will damp the fires of your conceit.

Young warrior, beginning with so much hope, I can recommend you to *spend your time in gratitude.* Bless God for making you what you are, for calling you out from a sinful world, for making you a soldier of the cross. Boasting is excluded, for grace reigns. If the Lord has called you to work for him, I charge you bless his name, for you are highly honoured to unloose the latchet of his shoes. The meanest work for Jesus is a grander thing than the dignity of an emperor. Bless the Lord for his condescension in permitting you to do anything for him. You have no time for boasting, you need every moment for ~~thanksgiving.~~

~~is~~ You want every hour for *prayer.* If ever we ought to pray it surely is when we are newly entered upon the Christian life. If ever a minister

ought to pray it is when he commences his ministry. Brethren, when ought a man *not* to pray? Surely there is no period when prayer is out of place. We have need to cry to the strong for strength all through life; but if there should be a special season set apart for prayer it should be in entering upon a new course of life, or undertaking a fresh duty. In buckling on the harness we should ask the great Captain to watch over us, that we may be kept faithful unto death. Squander not precious time in vain glory, but consecrate it to devotion.

Remember, young soldier, that you are bound to use your time in *learning obedience*, looking to your Captain and Commander, as the handmaid looks to her mistress. You have enlisted beneath the standard, be careful that you march according to marching orders, that you stand fast when your leader bids you stand, walk without weariness when he bids you walk, and run without fainting when he bids you run. You are to take your cue from Jesus. He gives the word of command, it is yours by grace to follow it. You have your hands full, I do assure you, to lead an obedient life; you will have no time to cry, "I have done well," for each moment calls upon you for fresh deeds of obedience, and therefore bids you afresh ask help from on high.

Dear friends, you have no space for boasting, for your fullest attention will be wanted to maintain *watchfulness*. You have just put on your harness. The devil will speedily discover that! He will pay his respects to you very soon! As soon as he sees a new soldier of the cross enlisted he takes a fresh arrow from his quiver, makes it sharp, dips it in gall, and fits it to his string. "I will try this youngster," saith he, and before long a fiery dart flies noiselessly through the air. He knows where to shoot it, and if it does not wound the first time he will learn by a little trial where your weak point is, and he will gall you, and before he has done with you he will change your boast into groans. It may be, even the people whom you seek to benefit will try you; the children whom you hope to convert will show that old Adam in them is too strong for you. You will find, O young minister, that the soil will wear out your ploughshare. Where you meant to bless you will receive coldness and even anger in return. Fighting for Christ is not all parade. The young recruit puts on the colours, the sergeant gives him his shilling, and he feels himself a mighty man as he goes down the village! He will feel rather different when he is carried on the ambulance into the hospital, to lose a limb, or pine away to a skeleton. He will know what fighting means and what battle means before long. I do not speak to dispirit any one who is beginning warfare for Christ, but I do speak with this intent—that all vainglory may be put far from us.

Once more upon this point. The young warrior may not boast, for he will want all the faith he has, and all the strength of God also, *to keep him from despondency*. There is a tendency in us, especially when we are commencing the divine life, to swing either this way towards self-confidence, or that way towards despondency. A raw recruit thinks himself a fine fellow, and when he finds he is not, he despairs: he ought to have despaired of himself at first, but in course of time he makes the mistake of despairing of his God too. Think as *little as ever* you can of yourself, you will never err there: no man

walks too humbly, or has too little self-conceit. But think as
as ever you can of your God, you will never think too well of
the grandest reliance upon God that ever a man had was
anted by the truth. He that believeth in the Lord to any extent
never be ashamed or confounded, world without end. "Cursed
that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm; but blessed is he
trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." I make
ssion here that whenever I have failed I have always failed in
s which I thought I could do very well indeed: I had done them
ften that I was sure I could manage them. And where I have
r failed has been in great difficulties, when I was quite out of my
b, and could do nothing myself. I have thrown the whole matter
my God, and rested in him alone, and all has been well. I feel
w to be a great pleasure to get out of my depth, where I cannot
h the bottom, where the human is altogether exhausted; for then
asting love and faithfulness come in, and it is blessed swimming,
ed up by the waves of eternal love and immutable truth.

I close with the fourth point, which is this, THOSE WHO GIRD
THE HARNESS CERTAINLY OUGHT NOT TO GLORY, FOR THOSE WHO
PUTTING IT OFF FIND NOTHING TO BOAST OF.

love to look upon my venerable brethren and sisters who have
in Christ these many years and have worn so well; but they
not put off their harness yet, for until we get across the river
re never out of gunshot of the enemy. I have heard say that
es fall oftener at the bottom of a hill than anywhere else; and
n sure it is true with men. I have watched carefully, and,
gh I sometimes hear of young men going aside (it is sad that
ould hear of it), yet if there be any great blight upon Chris-
reputations, it almost always happens to a man of long ex-
nce; very frequently, to a man who is growing old. I do not
r why. Whether it is that those advanced people begin to trust to
experience or not, I cannot tell; but so I have marked it around
and so I have noticed it in the records of the Bible. The falls
nostly of middle-aged or elderly people. We have hardly in Scrip-
an instance of any young professor that turned aside. The reason is,
nk, because when we are weak, then are we strong; and when we
give ourselves to be strong, we become weak. He who has been a
unt of God for seventy years, and borne an unblemished character
long, may in the very last year of his life commit a folly which will
his memory. Blessed be God, it will not destroy his soul, for the
will keep him from that; "that evil one toucheth him not;" but
at the last the man may so injure himself that he may go with
en bones all the way to heaven, and be saved "so as by fire."
kept off its invaders a long while, but, after all, it was taken;
welve years in which the Greeks were kept at bay stood for nothing
ast the one night in which the hollow horse was dragged in, filled
armed men. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be
l," and if there were not a covenant promise of final preservation,
night give up our spiritual fighting in despair. So that the
stian man never ungirds his harness in this life; still we may say
the brother is putting it off when there is but a step betwixt him

and death in the course of nature. Now, how do you find Christians of that kind when you have attended their dying beds, if you have had the privilege of doing so? Did you ever find a Christian stayed up with pillows in his bed boasting of what he had done? When Augustus, the Roman Emperor, was dying, he asked those who were around him whether he had acted well his part; and they said, "Yes." Then he said, "Clap me as I go off the stage." Did you ever hear a Christian say that? I remember Addison, about whose Christianity little can be said, asked others to "come and see how a Christian could die," but it was a very unchristian thing to do, for forgiven sinners should never make exhibitions of themselves in that fashion. Certainly I never saw dying Christians boastful. They always depreciate themselves, and appreciate their Master. One of them said he was tying all his good works and all his bad works into a bundle; for, he said, he had tried to sort them, and the good ones had so many spots on them that he hardly knew which was which, and so he tied them all up in one bundle and threw them all overboard, and he meant to swim to glory on the plank of free grace. He did wisely.

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling."

That stanza has been the dying language of thousands of the saints. They have cried, "None but Jesus!" and they have asked to have put upon their tombstones, "A sinner saved by grace;" or—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall;
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all."

The tendency of advancing years on Christians is to take away self-confidence, and to make them more confident in God.

Those who have had real experience of the things of God do not talk about perfection in the flesh, but they confess their past failures, and mourn over them. They do not even say that if they had their lives over again they would do better, they are afraid they might even do worse; and if they have done well in any point, and they know it, they will not deny it, but they say, "Ah, only divine grace kept me from making a terrible mistake there, but the Lord appeared for me, and helped me." If these aged ones are communicative when throwing off their harness they will tell you many wonderful stories of how the Lord came to their rescue when their steps had almost gone, and their feet had well nigh slipped; and, young people! it will do you good to hear them tell how, when their strength was spent, the eternal might of God sustained them; how when they had no merits, the love, and blood, and righteousness of Jesus Christ made them still rejoice and triumph before God; and when they were fainting and ready to die, a touch from their dear Lord and Master's hand made them stand upon their feet full of strength, and expectant of victory. If you could watch the saints as they doff their harness piece by piece, and go down into the Jordan; if you could see them as they come up out of the river and begin to ascend the celestial hills upon the other side, you would hear them

sing, but you could not detect a single note of self-glory in all their song. When you are privileged to stand upon yonder streets of shining gold, and hear the hymns of the blood-washed ones, their one note will be, "Worthy is the Lamb! Worthy is the Lamb!" Though the Lamb says, "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy," they do not count themselves so; their reply to their Lord's encomium will be, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honour, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might!"

Dear friends who are girding on your harness, the gist of all is this: confide in God, but distrust yourselves; have done with every glorying, except glorying in the Lord. In pastoral observation I have seen, and wish to mention it here, many timid, trembling, and even mourning Christians, and I could have wished that they had more faith and more joy; but yet I have seen them walk very carefully and humbly, and tremblingly, and they have never brought any disgrace upon the church or grieved my heart: and, on the other hand, I have seen others who were very sure and very loud, and very zealous, and pushed themselves to the front, and won a great deal of esteem, who have not only never been any better than they should be, but by-and-by have needed to be rebuked and censured, and perhaps ultimately severed from among us, for their glorying was in themselves. There is nothing like full assurance for excellence, and there is nothing like presumption for worthlessness. Never mistake the one for the other. You cannot trust God too much, nor trust yourself too little. I read a book one day called "Self-made Men," and in its own sphere it was excellent, but spiritually I should not like to see a self-made man. I should think he would be an awful specimen of humanity. At any rate, a self-made Christian is one of a sort that very soon the devil takes, as I have seen children take a bran doll and shake it all out; he likes to shake out self-made Christians till there is nothing left of them. But God-made men, these are they that do exploits; and God-made Christians who fall back upon the eternal strength at all times and confide there, these are the men to hold on their way and wax stronger and stronger.

My subject has little bearing upon unconverted persons, except this, that as you see Christian people are not to trust themselves, it is clear that unconverted people cannot be saved by any trust in themselves, or by anything that they can do. Even "the just shall live by faith;" and for you who are not just, but are sinners still, the only way of salvation is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, that you may believe in him, and you shall be saved. If there is any unconverted old man here, he is not putting off his harness, for he never was a soldier of Christ, but I would like to say to him,—however old you may be, the mercy of God is still toward you, and, if you believe in Jesus, at whatever age you may be, you shall be saved. Last night I was preaching at a certain place, and before I preached one of God's children, a Wesleyan, said to me, "I shall always love you, dear sir." And I said, "Why?" "You remember preaching," said he, "in the fields up in King Edward's Road, Hackney?" "Yes, I cannot forget it." "Well," said he, "my father was seventy years of age at that time, and he had never felt the power of religion; but that sermon was the means

in God's hand, of his conversion, and he became a zealous, earnest believer during the rest of his life." "Well, my brother," I said, "I am glad I happened to come down here to-night, for that is nineteen years ago, and I had never heard that God had brought a soul to Jesus by that sermon." I would to God to-night that some poor soul on the borders of the grave, who, apart from divine grace, lies at the very mouth of hell, may even now make a desperate plunge into the arms of Jesus. Fall into the bosom of Jesus, and he will not cast you away, for he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. God grant you may come, for Jesu's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xxvii.

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"I AND THE CHILDREN."

A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 20TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for
re in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion."—
viii. 18.

might possibly have had some difficulty in explaining this verse,
might have referred it to the prophet Isaiah and his sons, had
inspiration been its own expositor. Turn to the New Testament
the text will be no mystery to you; its key hangs on its proper

In the second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and at the
18th verse, we read—"For both he that sanctifieth and they who
sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call
brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in
midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I
put my trust in him. And again, Behold, I and the children which
hath given me." We have thus from divine revelation assured
evidence that it is our Lord who speaks, and speaks of his people as
children. This clue we will follow.

The context sets forth, as is most common throughout the whole of
Scripture, the different results which result from the appearance
of a Saviour. He is rejected by many, and accepted by others.
as set for the fall and rise of many in Israel. To those who
loved him he is a glory and a defence, but to others "a stone of
offence and a rock of offence." Even now his gospel is a "savour
of life unto death" as well as a "savour of life unto life." The election
process is always being worked out, the separating process continues,
will continue, until the eternal purpose has been completely fulfilled.
to whom the Lord has chosen feel the attractions of the Saviour,
come to him; while others wilfully and wickedly close their eyes
to brightness and reject him, and he leaves them in their willing
rejection. "He came unto his own and his own received him not, but
many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons
of God, even to them that believed on his name."

Jo. 1, 194.

Of those who received the Lord, we find it written that the testimony of God would be left in their charge. "Bind up the testimony; seal the law among my disciples." The outside world rejects the testimony of God; its own thoughts and opinions are much more pleasant to it; but among the Lord's disciples his commands are prized, and his teachings sacredly preserved. They see the seal of the living God upon the gospel, and they also set to it their seal that God is true; they accept the gospel of Jesus as very truth, and hold it, and mean to hold it against all comers.

To the true disciples of Jesus there may come times of darkness; it has been so with the church of old, and will be so still, but they have this star to gild their midnight—that Christ their Master and representative is waiting upon the Lord, and expecting and pleading for brighter and happier times. "I will wait," saith he, "upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him." Christ in the dark ages of Judaism looked for the dawn of gospel day, and even now he sets himself upon his watch-tower and looks for a golden age for his redeemed people. So interested is he in their welfare that he will not rest till their brightness shines forth as a lamp that burneth.

Having thus noted the context we will come closely to the text. On this earth a people exist who have accepted the Messiah, and have become his disciples, and look for all from their Lord. Of these people the text says, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me."

Here we shall notice, first, *a remarkable relationship ascribed to Christ*; secondly, *a spontaneous avowal of it*—"Behold, I and the children whom thou hast given me;" and, thirdly, *a common function*, common to the Lord and to his disciples: they are appointed to be "signs" and "wonders" in Israel from the Lord of hosts which dwelleth in mount Zion.

I. First, here is a REMARKABLE RELATIONSHIP. Jesus is called a father. Now, this is not according to precise theology, or according to the more formal doctrinal statements of Scripture, and we must, therefore, take care that we do not make confusion in our minds. Jesus is not "the Father," and we must always carefully maintain the distinction of persons in the Godhead. The Son of God is one with the Father, but he is not *the* Father; and we must take care we do not ascribe to the Son acts which are peculiar to the Father. According to correct speech, it is the first person of the divine Trinity whom we call the Father, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead; and when we say, "Abba, Father," "Our Father which art in heaven," and "Thanks be unto the Father," we do not refer to the Lord Jesus, but to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Still, the title of Father is very applicable to our Lord Jesus Christ for many reasons. And first, because *he is our federal Head*. We speak correctly of "father Adam," and Jesus is the second Adam who heads up our race anew, and is the representative man of redeemed mankind. He only of mankind stands to others as Adam stood, head of a covenant, involving others in his acts. The second Adam, therefore, may

well regard us as his children, in whom the covenant promise is fulfilled, "His seed also will I make to endure for ever." As the first Adam looking down the ages upon us all may well cry with astonishment, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me!" so Jesus, viewing the vast company of the faithful, sees in them his seed, and finds in them a sacred satisfaction for the travail of his soul. We are in him, he stands for us, and we are in this sense his children.

Our Lord is also Father of the golden age of grace and glory. Isaiah calls him the "son born," and the "child given," and yet "the everlasting Father," and our hymn has well translated that expression.

"Sire of ages ne'er to cease,
Prince of life and Prince of peace."

There is an age of silver in which we now live, which Christ has produced by his first advent and the consequent proclamation of the gospel, and there is an age of gold yet to come, delightfully anticipated by the saints, of which Christ will be the Father and Lord. Then in him, and in his seed, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Indeed, I might say, that the eternity of blessedness in which the sanctified shall dwell is an age which owns Christ for its Father; and so he may well be called "the Father of eternity," or "the everlasting Father."

Again, there is a sense in which Christ is our father, *because by his teaching we are born unto God.* Just as the minister who brings a soul to Christ is said to be the spiritual parent to such a soul, and is, indeed, instrumentally so, so the Lord Jesus, as the author of our faith, is our spiritual Father in the family of God, and of him the whole family in heaven and earth is named. Our Lord, in bringing many sons unto glory, is truly their Father, for he it is who calls them into spiritual life, and puts them among the children of God. He is that "corn of wheat" which, except it fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but, inasmuch as he has died, he bringeth forth much fruit, and we—we all of us, who have believed in him—are the living fruit of our dying and risen Saviour, and we speak not incorrectly when we call him Father. He is our elder brother, but he is also "over his own house, whose house are we." The word which quickened us came to us by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

Now, let us see whether there is not much of teaching in this metaphor by which we are called children of the Lord Jesus. The expression denotes, first, that we derive our spiritual life from him as children take their *origin* from their father. Of him are we. If he had not created us we had not been in the world; if he had not redeemed us, we had not possessed a portion in the world to come. If he had not called us, we had still been in darkness and in death. If he had not quickened us—for he quickeneth whom he will—we had still lain among the dry bones of the valley of sin. That we are we owe to the Father's providence; but that we are born again we owe to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Apart from that matchless scheme of which Christ is the sum and substance, there had been no pardoned sinners, no believers, no children adopted into the family of God, no heirs of God, no priests and kings to reign with Christ for ever and

ever. As we look at the dear wounds of Jesus we see the rock whence we were hewn, when we gaze upon his precious blood, we see the life blood of our souls. He is the root that beareth us, the stem of which we are the branches.

Children do not merely take their origin from their father, but they have a *likeness* to his nature ; and this is most true in the case of our Lord and his regenerated people, for he has become like to us, and on the other hand he has made us like to him. Note how the apostle puts it, "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself also took part of the same ;" "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one ;" "It behoved him to be made like unto his brethren." As a father feels for his children because they are of the same flesh and blood as himself, so doth the Lord sympathise with his people, for they are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. No father can be so thoroughly one with his offspring as Jesus is with us.

Moreover our divine Lord is bringing us into his likeness, and making us partakers of his nature. True believers are as like their Lord as little children are like their father. As I said last Thursday night, the likeness may be in some points a caricature, so that we smile to see ourselves represented and misrepresented in our children, yet there it is, we see our image in them ; and so the image of Christ is upon all his believing people, it is much marred and very miniature, but still it is the true image of his love. As on the prepared glass of the photographer the likeness is present, but needs to be brought out by means best known to himself, so it is with us ; the image of God has been renewed in us, but it lies somewhat hidden, and the Holy Spirit has it in hand to develop in us the life of Christ, and his work will be complete at the appearing of our Lord and Saviour, "for when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

I believe that the text has in it very clearly the idea of *charge and responsibility*. Children are a charge always ; a comfort sometimes. No parent has a child without lying under obligations to God to take care of it, and to nurse it for him. Sometimes the responsibility becomes very heavy, and involves us in much anxiety. Wherever conscience is lively, fatherhood is regarded as a solemn thing. Now, Jesus Christ, when looking upon his people, calls them "children whom God has given him ;" as if he recognised the charge laid upon him to keep, instruct, and perfect his own people. Remember his last words to his Father before he went to his passion : "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world : thine they were, and thou gavest them me ; and they have kept thy word. While I was with them in the world I kept them in thy name : those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition ; that the scripture might be fulfilled." Like Jacob with Laban's sheep, our Lord looked upon his elect as a charge for which he was responsible ; and ere he departed out of this life he rendered in an account to his heavenly Father. Even now also that great Shepherd of the sheep charges himself with the preservation of *his own ransomed ones*, and when he, at the last, shall gather all his redeemed people around him, there will not be one missing, and he

will say, "Behold, I and the children that thou hast given me." We call him Father, then, because as a father has charge of his family, and is before God responsible for their training and up-bringing, so Christ himself is surety for his people, and is under bond to bring the many sons unto glory.

In our relationship towards our children there is involved very often a great deal of *care and grief*. Happy parents who can say of a child, "He never caused me anxiety"! Happy father who can say of all his household, "I have had no sorrow from one of them"! I fear the case is rare. I know that this father of whom we are speaking had care and grief enough for his household; yea, for their sakes he bore a weight of woe which crushed him to the ground. Oh, you sorrowing parents! take comfort as you remember the greater griefs of the head of the chosen family, for all their infirmities and sins and wilful wanderings were laid upon him, and, for his children's sake, his "soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." The pangs of his sacred fatherhood brought him to Gethsemane and its bloody sweat; ay, to Calvary, and its shameful doom: what are our griefs compared with these? Jesus must needs die for his family that he might be able to say, "Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me." Count it not, therefore, a strange thing, since you cost your Lord so much anguish, if sometimes your children should pour coals of fire into your bosoms.

But, brethren, the possession of children involves a very *near and dear love*. You may try to love other people's children, but I think there will always be a loving tenderness to your own which you cannot give to a stranger's child, however much you try. Your own children after all, it is natural, and it is right, must have the warmest place in your heart. Even thus the Lord Jesus has a special love for his own, he is the Saviour of all men, but specially of them that believe; he manifests himself to them and not unto the world. It is almost a degradation of the love of Christ to compare it to anything human; it is so amazing, so divine, that it transcends comparison. If all the loves of parents could be piled up together in one vast mound—the love of fathers, and the still tenderer love of mothers—yet the whole of that Alp would not equal the immeasurable love of Jesus Christ to his own people. Who understands its heights and depths, its lengths and breadths? Oh, thou dear Lord and Saviour! because of thy dear love to us we call thee not only Rabbi, but Father; and as we hear thee say to us, "Children, have ye any meat?" we answer, "Yes, thou Father of thy church, thy table feasts us to the full."

Children, however, when they behave aright, bring to the heart of their parent sweet solace and *dear delight*. Oh, I love the thought, and I long to bring it out before you, that as a father is pleased when he sees his children growing up in the fear of God, when he observes their good character and qualities, when he marks their struggles for that which is right, and their attempts to curb themselves in that which is wrong—so is Jesus pleased with us. He speaks with great delight in our text, "Behold, I and the children." He is evidently gratified with them. The sight of them gives him content. We readily see anything that is good in our children; we have a quick

eye for their beauties; sometimes, perhaps, we do not sufficiently see that which is deficient or wrong: but assuredly our Lord must have a very keen eye for his people's loveliness, for he says of his church, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." We can see many spots in ourselves, but he looks at us with other eyes. I suppose he looks at us through the glass of his own righteousness, with eyes full of perfect love. His delights are with the sons of men, he rejoices over us with singing. Never does a prayer of penitence rise from a breaking heart without rejoicing the soul of Jesus, for "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Never does a believer struggle against wrong, endure oppression patiently, or conquer sin, but Jesus is glad. Each budding grace and growing virtue charms him, even as parents are charmed with their hopeful little ones.

Our joy in our sons and our daughters looks forward and refreshes us with the prospect of what they will be. How many bright hopes light up a mother's heart as she thinks of her son or daughter! She reckons upon comfort from them in her declining years. Our Lord knows what his people are to be, and he rejoices therein. Oh, if you could see yourselves as you will be in futurity, you would not know yourselves. If you could only have a photograph of your future glory, and could study it, you would say, "Shall I ever be like that? Shall I ever be so fair, and bright, and pure as that?" Now, the Lord Jesus sees you as you shall be, and he takes delight in you, and says, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me."

Putting, then, all these things together, you will not fail to see the fitness of the figure by which our Lord is represented as standing in the midst of his own redeemed, as father among his children.

II. Now we shall turn to the second point, and utter a few words upon it. There is a SPONTANEOUS AVOWAL. He says, "Behold, I and the children whom thou hast given me." The Lord *owns* his children. Sometimes they are ashamed to own him, and he might always be ashamed to own them, but he never is: he speaks of them without hesitation. It is, "I and the children." They are defiled and unworthy, they have been falling in the mire and have torn their clothes, and I know not what besides, but he says, "They are my children;" and he never thinks of casting them off. I wonder he does so avow them, but it is his infinite love to them, and his boundless delight in them, which makes him still say, "I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine."

Not only does Jesus own them as his thus publicly, but he *glories in them* as being God's gift to him—"The children whom *thou* hast given me"; as if they were something more than ordinary children. They are the promised fruit of the "travail of his soul"; they are the reward which Jehovah covenanted to bestow on him for his agonies and death. He looks upon them as the spoil of his great life-battle, as the crown of his life's labour. Solomon gave to Hiram, the King of Tyre, certain cities, and he did not like them, but called them *Cabul*, or foul; but our Redeemer is well pleased with his reward, he takes this purchased inheritance to his heart, and rejoices therein, saying—
"Behold, I and the children whom thou hast given me."

Observe, that the Lord not only owns his people and delights in them, but he *challenges inspection*. He says, "Behold!—look at them—I am not ashamed of them. Look at them, my Father—look at them all glorious in thy Son, all washed in my blood, all robed in my righteousness—look at them, and see how glorified I am in them. Thine eye, though full of fire against sin, can see no sin in them. Thy hand, though it grasps the thunderbolt of vengeance against transgression, will not smite them, for I have made atonement." "Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me" is a call to the whole world to look, "for these things were not done in a corner." Jesus did not come into the world that he and his children should be hidden under a bushel and should not be known; but standing right out, as a city set on a hill, Jesus says, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me." "Look at them, for they are meant to be looked at; they are set 'for signs and wonders' throughout all generations."

And do notice again—for it affects my mind much more powerfully than I can express, "Behold, *I and the children*." I can understand a mother speaking thus about herself and children, but for Christ the Lord of glory to unite his glorious name with those of such poor worms of the dust is very wonderful. There! sit down and wonder and weep over it,—Jesus says, "I and the children." Well did old Rowland Hill sing,

"And when I shall die, receive me, I'll cry;
For Jesus has loved me—I cannot tell why.
But this thing I find, we two are so joined,
He won't be in heav'n and leave me behind."

Jesus will not be without us. He cannot bear it. You mothers do not think it enough to be indoors in bed yourselves when night comes on, you want the dear children to be safely housed too. If you were pursued by wolves on some snowy plain in Russia, you would not be satisfied to escape yourself, and leave your children to be devoured. Your motto would be, "I and the children." You would live or die with them. How often when mothers have been overtaken in snow-storms have they been found dead, with their little ones nestling in their bosoms still alive. The mother has often taken off her garments to wrap them around her babe, and even so Christ has stripped himself of every honour and comfort, and died to prove his infinite love for his own. It is no idle sentence in which he sets forth his union with his beloved in very deed, and of a truth he binds himself and them in one sacred bond. I cannot tell you how I rejoice in these words! I have them in my mouth and in my heart—"I and the children." Blessed be our Lord for speaking thus!

Now, beloved, if Jesus owns us so lovingly let us always own him: and if Christ takes us into partnership—"I and the children"—let us reply, "Christ is all." Let him stand first with us; and let our name be for ever joined with his name, let us be bound up in the bundle of life with him. It is plain that he delights in us: let us delight in him; it is clear he glories in us; let us glory in him. He invites others to look at us and him, let us invite all mankind to behold our glorious Lord. Let us get behind our Lord, and set him always before

us. Whoever visits us, let them not leave us without taking knowledge that we have been with Jesus. If we show our treasures, as Hezekiah did, let us begin with showing our Saviour, for no Babylonians will ever come and take him away from us. Our "soul shall make her boast in the Lord," and none shall ever stop us of this glorying here or hereafter. Enough, then, concerning the *spontaneous avowal*. Oh, may we be among the happy company of whom our Lord shall say, "Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me"!

III. Thirdly—and into this I would throw the strength of the discourse—there is A COMMON FUNCTION. Christ and his people "are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts which dwelleth in Mount Zion."

Both Christ and his people are set for a purpose. First, they are to be "signs and wonders" by way of *testimony*. Our Lord is called the "Word of God." A word is the means of communication between one mind and another; God speaks to men by Christ, nay, Christ is his speech. If you want to know what God has to say to you, see what Christ was and is. In the same manner, only in an inferior degree, believers are God's voice to men: he speaks to the world through his people. In a happy Christian God says, "I will make you happy, too, as I have made this man, if you seek me in the same way as this man did." In the believing Christian who gets his prayers answered God says to men, "I will hear your prayer if you pray as this man does, with faith in my promise." All the world of nature reveals God, but the revelation is inarticulate, and rather resembles the teaching of a picture or a hieroglyph than a clear distinct voice; but we, my brethren, are to be God's mouth among the sons of men, and our conversation, our profession, our life in its entirety, is to be a witness from God to man; a testimony for truth, for righteousness, for holiness, and also for the power of the quickening Spirit, for the efficacy of redeeming blood, and for all the truths contained in divine revelation. We are not to be blank sheets, or papers with a blot on them, and nothing more; but letters written by God, and passed round among men that they may read in us what God has to say. Now, it is very clearly so in Christ, his holy life and blessed death are a wonderful witness to the people; and as to us, the Lord has said, "Ye are also my witnesses." I would inquire concerning many of you here who make a profession, whether you are really God's voice to men. If not, what is the use of your dumb religion?

We are, secondly, signs and wonders among sinners by way of *marvel*. Believers, by their declaration of God's testimony, become more and more singular in the judgment of men. No man but a Christian can understand a Christian. The spiritual discerneth all things, yet he himself is discerned of no man. Carnal minds cannot make us out, "for we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." The person who never strikes you as having anything singular about him, who is just like men of the world, is probably no Christian. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ yourself, the unregenerate will misunderstand and misrepresent you; but if everybody is pleased with you it is pretty clear that God is not, for "the friendship of this world is enmity with God." Genuine Christians will generally be reckoned

by the world to be singular people. For instance, they profess to have been converted, and so to have undergone a miraculous change; they profess to have a new life, compared with which they were dead before. The world calls this nonsense. Regeneration! What fanaticism! In the days of Whitfield and Wesley the loose spirits made rare fun of the idea of being born again, and the preacher of regeneration was dubbed Mr. Wildgoose, and his followers a set of enthusiasts. The world now practises the crafty device of using our terms and phrases, and meaning something else by them; thus talking of being regenerated by baptism, and all that nonsense. To be "born again" is still a marvel to the sons of men.

The real Christian is a man who has faith in providence, and believes in God, and therefore he is calm and unmoved in times of distress; he believes in the lilies which do not spin and yet are clothed, in the ravens which sow not and do not reap and yet are fed; and therefore, though using his utmost diligence, he is not anxious, but lives in peace. The world envies him, but cannot comprehend him. Moreover, the Christian is a man who has power in prayer: he asks and receives, knocks and it is opened unto him; and the outside world either disbelieves the fact or else looks upon it as a strange affair. It must be so, we must be wondered at. I do not say that some of you Christian people are any marvel or wonder at all, for I do not think you are: the marvel is that you dare call yourselves Christians at all; but I do mean that the genuine Christian is in many points a singular person, so singular that others cannot read his riddle. When a man becomes converted in an ungodly family, he is like a young swan in a duck's nest: they cannot understand him. They say, "This is a strange bird! Where did he come from?" They count him ugly, because he is not like the rest. Frequently ungodly relatives consider the young convert to be going out of his mind, or as being naturally weak in the intellect. They put him down as insane while he is sorrowful, and as idiotic when he is joyous.

The world cannot understand a Christian's endurance of trial, but they set it down to hardheartedness. They see him calm and composed; he neither raves nor blasphemes, nor tears his hair, and if the worst comes to the worst, he still says, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." This perplexes worldlings, and no wonder, for it puzzled the devil himself. He laid Job on a dunghill, covered with boils, scraping himself with a piece of potsherd, brought to poverty, his own wife tempting him, and his friends accusing him, and yet that man, who was a greater conqueror than Alexander or Napoleon, still said, "What! Shall we receive good from the hands of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil? The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." When the Lord allows any of us to be similarly tried, and sustains us in the trial, we become "a wonder unto many."

One of the greatest wonders to the ungodly is a Christian's death-bed. Ungodly men, who have despised religion altogether, have been troubled in conscience and almost persuaded to be Christians through the holy triumphs of dying saints. Many an infidel remembers his

mother's holy life—how quiet, how loving she was, making the house always happy; and he remembers how grieved she was when her boy began to be sceptical about his mother's Saviour. That dying charge of hers will ring in his memory for ever; that dying look of joyful triumph from that eye which had no tear in it except for those that were left behind, that expiring song, that shout of victory, he cannot get over it. If a man wishes to be sceptical, he must not see true Christians either live or die; otherwise facts will convince him against his will, or make it hard to doubt.

When the believer's testimony for good becomes a marvel, it is not wonderful if he afterwards becomes an *object of contempt*. What did the world say of the Master? "They called the Master of the house Beelzebub"; he was despised and rejected of men, and, if you are one of his disciples, the world will despise you also. I will tell you what they say of us,—“They are all a parcel of dupes, led by the nose by a man. They will believe anything he tells them.” All this because you are true to your pastor and the word of God. Then, as soon as they see that you are not led by a man, but think for yourself, they cry, “Ah, you are one of those pig-headed ones, you will never be taught; why don't you believe as your fathers did, and keep to the old church?” If the world cannot wound us on one side, it tries the other. If they cannot accuse us of being black, our enemies will say that we are of a sickly white.

Readily do accusers change their sweet voices, and cry, “Ah! it is all a scheme for money getting.” If the minister is zealous, they say, “Self-interest is at the bottom. If it is not love of money, it is love of power and influence.” To the Christian people they say, “No doubt you increase your business by it; many a man puts his religion in his shop window, and finds it pay amazingly well.” They know in their own souls that you are free from any sinister motive, but they will not do you justice. Like Satan, they say, “Does Job serve God for nought? Hast thou not set a hedge about him, and all that he hath?” Meanwhile, if you were in poverty through religion, they would sing another tune, and say, “A pretty thing comes of being a Christian! Why, you will soon be without a shoe to your foot! Look what you bring yourself and your family to.” If God pays good wages, the devil says, “You only serve him for the wages.” If present mercies are small, the old accuser tauntingly exclaims, “A pretty master you serve. See how he starves you!” There is no pleasing the world, and we have no desire to please it! As Paul said, “The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

I know the kind of tone adopted by others; they plume themselves upon their intellect and set us down as behind our times. “We have no patience,” say they, “with this believing in prayer, this expectation of conversion, this reliance upon atonement and imputed righteousness. Why, it is downright stupidity! Such preaching is only an echo from the graves of Puritans. No doubt Puritanism was a power in the days of Cromwell, but it is out of date now. We require more advanced thought in this enlightened age when we have collisions on railways and other grand improvements, and have discovered that the universe made itself. We cannot afford to keep behind

these intelligent times, and must go in for a splendid smash like other people."

If this does not wound us they will say, "These people are not thinkers: they have no culture;" and so they set us down for fools. In which we greatly rejoice; being glad to be fools for Christ's sake. Christians in all ages have been considered fools. If you are travelling in Switzerland and see an idiot, he is a "cretin"—that is a Christian. Yes! Such was the byword—the fool was called a Christian, and the Christian was thought a fool. We are satisfied to bide our time, knowing that the day shall come in which the worldly wise will not only be called fools by others, but will confess themselves so in endless despair.

But then they say, "These people are too precise, they make life dreary!" We are in our own esteem the happiest people in the world, and could not be much happier this side of heaven; but because we do not care for their vain pleasures, their husks, and swines' meat, therefore we are austere and miserable. Only they think so who know nothing about us. We have meat to eat which they know not of, and like Daniel and his brethren, though we taste not of the world'sainties, we are in better case than those who do.

Men of the world are apt to say, "You are such a set of bigots; you think everybody wrong but yourselves." Is it wonderful that if we think we are right, we do not believe that those who are opposed to us can be right also? If we know that two and two make four we are intolerant enough to affirm that they cannot make five. It is a degradation to my intellect to expect me to believe that yes and no can be equally correct upon the same matter; triflers with religion may consent to such folly, but those who are in earnest cannot do so. If to be sure that what God says is true be bigotry, we confess that bigotry. Our Master says, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned,"—we believe this, and the damnatory clause too, and are content to abide the judgment of the last great day as to whether such a belief will then be accounted bigotry or no.

Our despisers often cry, "See what conceit and pride! They think themselves God's elect, and that he has a special favour for them, and pardons their sins, and saves them." Just so! Call that conceit if you please, we are not ashamed to confess it. If you saw a rich man going down the street and were rude enough to say, "See how conceited a man he is; he thinks himself worth ten thousand pounds," he might quietly smile and say, "I do think so, and rightly so, for I am worth several hundred thousand pounds." They say we are conceited because we rejoice, when it is our fault not to rejoice more. The Lord has done great things for us, we dare not deny it, and have no wish to do so. He has made us to be his sons and daughters, and we must glory in his name. If others mistake our joy or pride we cannot help it, for we know right well that we give all the glory to God in our own souls.

When believers thus become, as they will be, objects of contempt, they will be assailed with ridicule, and bespattered with slander; bad motives will be imputed to them, and the truths for which they are

willing to die will be attacked, both in their persons and their testimonies. They must bear reproach, and if they do they will become wonders again. If they suffer but never retaliate, if they never return railing for railing, if they bear and forbear, their patience will make them wonders. As the ages shall roll on, the holy, and the godly, and the Christ-like, Jesus and his children, will go from victory to victory. In every coming age, even though persecution should rage as it did in former days, the church of God will bear it, and so defeat it; superstition, and heresy, and worldliness will come, but the church will pass through the storm; and at the last, when truth shall conquer, when Gethsemane shall be transfigured into Paradise, and the shame of the cross of Calvary shall be lost in the glory of the "great white throne;" when there shall be no more the crown of thorns, and nails, and sponge and vinegar, but when Jesus shall be proclaimed "King of kings and Lord of lords," and all his people shall reign with him, then will the saints be signs and wonders indeed. Know ye not that ye shall judge angels, sitting as assessors at the right hand of God? Know ye not that ye shall be the glory of Christ in that day? When the ungodly shall cry, "Rocks, hide us! mountains, on us fall!" "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Hold on, brother! and hold out to the end; be humbly and quietly faithful. Do not *try* to be a wonder, but *be* a wonder. Do not try to do some astonishing thing to attract attention; but "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Do not believe that the common Christianity of the present age will carry anybody to heaven. It is a counterfeit and a sham. It does not make men to differ from their fellows, it pretends to faith and has none, talks about love and does not show it, brags of truth and evaporates it into thin air in its latitudinarian charity. God give us back the real thing—staunch, strong belief in the gospel, real faith in Jesus, real prayer to him, real spiritual power. Then again there will be persecution, but it will only blow away the chaff, and leave the pure wheat! The world likes us better because we like the world better; it calls us friends because we doff our colours and sheathe our swords and play the craven; but if we preach and live the gospel in the old apostolic way, we shall soon have the devil roaring round the camp and the seed of the serpent hissing on all sides, but we fear not, for "the Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah viii. 11—23;
ix. 1—7.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—Psalm 116 (Song II.)
255, 342.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ABUNDANT PARDON.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 27TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He will abundantly pardon."—Isaiah lv. 7.

Our childhood we learned from Dr. Watts' Catechism that Isaiah that prophet who spoke more of Jesus Christ than all the rest. In chapter before us he had been declaring in the name of the Lord coming and the character of the Redeemer, speaking of him thus, "Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." No sooner had he thus proclaimed the appearance of the Christ than he beheld whole nations of the heathen turning to him; and, inspired by that sight, he began at once to address himself to the sinners around him, and bade them fly to him too. There is a natural connection between the physician and the sick, and there between the Saviour and the sinner. The prophet can hardly look of Christ as coming to be a leader, and a witness, and a commander without at once turning to the wicked, and to the unrepentant, and bidding them forsake their ways, enlist beneath their commander's banner, and participate in the blessings which he brings. There is a grand attraction for guilty men. "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him." Christ is always welcomed by those who know they want him: the self-righteous risees and Scribes murmur at him, but those who are humble and contrite, because conscious of their guilt, approach him, wishing, as it were, but to touch the hem of his garment, that they may be made clean. As the sun is attended by his planets, who borrow all their light from him, so is the Lord Jesus waited on by crowds of sinners, who find in him their hope, their all. As the thirsty harts resort to water-brooks so do needy souls hasten to Jesus, and it is according to the divine order that it should be so.

Notice what the prophet has to say. He speaks to the unrighteous and the wicked, and invites them to immediate faith and repentance, so I understand the passage to mean. "Seek ye the Lord while No. 1,195.

he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near," is an exhortation to prayer and faith. We cannot approach God in prayer without faith, for a prayer that has no faith in it must die on the road. To seek the Lord aright we must believe that "God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." I take that sixth verse, coupled with the third, to be a plain exhortation to faith. Faith cometh by hearing, and for this reason it is written, "Incline your ear and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live." As for repentance, that is clear in the seventh verse. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." The whole passage reads like a paraphrase of the gospel message, "repent ye, and believe the gospel." It seems as if Isaiah were rather an evangelist than a prophet, as if he had lived before his time, and preached the gospel like an apostle who had seen the Lord. Like the morning star, which shines upon the earth before the sun has risen, Isaiah rejoiced the hearts of believers with his clear radiance. The gladness of his soul in the thought of the coming messenger of the covenant, even Jesus Christ, kindled his spirit, and the light shone forth from him. He was so glad within his heart that his tongue was loosed, and straightway he addressed himself to those that "sat in darkness and the valley of the shadow of death," and bade them arise and quit the shades, and go unto their God, for there was no reason for despair; there was mercy, great mercy, abounding pardon to be had, and he bade them obtain it there and then. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."

The motive which he urged upon men was the certainty of their finding pardon. This was the tempting bait with which this ancient fisher of souls endeavoured to "catch men." May the Holy Spirit aid me while I use the same, and invite you to consider with me—the abundant pardon which God bestows upon the guilty. Having discoursed upon that at length, we shall, in the second place, consider what fair inferences may be drawn from this encouraging truth.

I. First then, according to the text, God does ABUNDANTLY PARDON. We will turn that truth over and over, and see it in many lights.

The pardon of God may well be abundant, for it wells up from an infinite fountain; "mercy, which endureth for ever," is the attribute from which that pardon springs. Pardon is the child of mercy, not of justice; and we may reckon that God will give abundant pardon because he delighteth in mercy. All the attributes of God are well balanced: like himself, they are infinite, and no one of them entrenches upon or dims the lustre of another. He is infinitely just, yet infinitely good; infinitely powerful, yet infinitely tender. We are quite sure that whenever an attribute of God comes into action it will be sufficiently revealed to make its glory manifest. There could be no mercy exercised by God until there was sin. Where all was blameless mercy had no sphere. As soon as the angels fell, the Lord might have exercised mercy had he pleased; but he did not choose to provide salvation for Satan and his rebellious hordes. As if to teach us that it is not inevitable that God should forgive, he suffered the fallen angels to fall irretrievably, and gave them up to everlasting fire as their due desert. Deceived by the old serpent, man also fell, and again there was

space for mercy. Man was an inferior creature to the angels: should he be allowed to perish or should grace step in? In this case mercy bowed the heavens and came down, and the Lord of all, as if to show that he "will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion," though he had passed the angels by, took up the race of men, and determined that his pardons should be bestowed upon them. Now, when he had resolved to let mercy come to the front and be seen—which I again say could not have been if there had been no sin—it was not wonderful that he allowed that blessed attribute to come forth in all the fulness of its might. In the creation you see power in its majesty, and wisdom in its grandeur; in providence you see goodness unbounded, and faithfulness unlimited; in the gulf to which the Lord has condemned the wicked you see justice in all its awful glory: and therefore when he determined to let mercy come forth from her ivory palaces it seemed but natural that he should give ample room and verge enough. It was not according to his mind that from the unfathomable depths of his love there should trickle forth a stinted stream of mercy, which might wash out a little sin, and water a scanty patch of the desert of our nature; but he poured floods upon the dry ground. When our sin abounded his grace did yet more abound; he opened the sluices of his mercy, he let down the cataracts of his infinite love from above, and drowned the mountains of our sin in a deluge of grace, so that we sang rightly just now—

"See here an endless ocean flows
Of never-failing grace,
Behold a dying Saviour's veins
The sacred flood increase.

"It rises high and drowns the hills,
Has neither shore nor bound,
Now, if we search to find our sins,
Our sins can ne'er be found."

"God is love" implies that love has a predominance in his character—not so as to mar other attributes, much less to destroy them—but as the consequence and blending of the whole; and, therefore, we may be sure that this most conspicuous of all the attributes, this summing up of them all, will have full range, and distribute abundantly its peculiar gifts.

But, secondly, as the attribute from which the pardon comes is abundant, so we know of a truth that *the objects to which this pardon has been extended are abundant too*. Well is it said, "He will abundantly pardon," for God has already pardoned sinners more numerous than can be estimated by human arithmetic. From the first sinner down to the last that has ever fled for refuge to the hope set before him in the gospel of our Lord Jesus what incalculable numbers have looked to him and have been lightened. Think, my brethren, of the myriads that have lived and died forgiven. Heaven is not scant of inhabitants. If you could now lift up your eyes, you should see that the old covenant promise has been in part fulfilled—"thy seed shall be as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof." The promised

seed in covenant with God, of which covenant God spake to Abraham, is already as many as the stars in heaven, and as the sand upon the sea shore, innumerable. They have come from every land, yea, from the uttermost parts of the earth have they come. Of every hue has their skin been, and their raiment of divers colours. Their language has been varied, and their condition also, but they have alike found grace in the sight of the Lord. Multitudes of the poor and needy, ay, of the outcasts have come—the women that ground at the mill, and the captives that fretted in the dungeon; God's wondrous eye of love has found out broken hearts by millions, and he has abundantly pardoned them.

Ay! and even on the face of the earth now what a multitude there are whom God has pardoned! Blessed be his name! There may not be so many as latitudinarianism imagines, but there are certainly more than bigotry conceives. God has pardoned a great multitude of the sons of men, and he intends to pardon yet more, for the gospel will spread; and brighter days are coming, and the halcyon period is on the wing when nations shall be converted at once, and, like the flocks of doves that come to the dovecot, souls shall fly to Jesus for forgiveness. When the whole earth shall be filled with his glory, in the multitude of repentant and forgiven sinners of the golden age men shall see that God does "abundantly pardon."

His pardon is, in the third place, abundant when we consider *the abundance of the sins which the love of God blots out*. Oh, what a subject I have now before me! Here is a river for depth unfathomable, and for breadth a river which cannot be passed over; it is a river to swim in! I must correct myself, and call it an ocean. Indeed, what shall I say of this sea of sin? Therein are creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts; there is that leviathan who doth mightily disport himself, and there are fierce tempests and horrible storms, which well may sink the barque which tempts them. I am overwhelmed with the thought of the abundance of transgression. Sin! From thy fruitful womb what myriads of ills proceed! What countless hosts of evils are the fruits of sin! How many are the sins themselves! Sins of *thought*—rebellious thoughts, proud thoughts, blasphemous thoughts, atheistical thoughts, covetous thoughts, lustful thoughts, impatient thoughts, cruel thoughts, false thoughts, thoughts of ill memory, and dreams of an unholy future; what swarms are there! Moreover, the omission of thoughts which should have been, such as thoughts of repentance, gratitude, reverence, faith, and the like, these are equally numerous: with the double list my roll is written within and without with a hideous catalogue. As the gnats which swarm the air at eventide, so numerous are the transgressions of the mind. Then there are sins of *word*. I should have to repeat the list again. What words have vexed the pure and holy ear of God! Words against himself, against his Son, against his law and gospel, against our neighbour, against everything that is good and true! Words proud and hectoring, words defiant and obstinate, words untruthful, words lascivious, words of vanity, and words of wilful unbelief. Oh God! how many are our sinful words. The sins of our tongue—what man is there who is able to reckon them up? Then come the sins of deed, which in very truth

are but the fruits which grow out of sins of thought. Can any man here estimate the number of his own sins from the first transgression of his childhood until grey old age, or to his present period of life? "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." Perhaps the sins we do not know are more numerous than the sins we are conscious of. Conscience may not be properly enlightened, and hence many a thing may not seem to be sinful which really is so; but God's clear eye perceiveth everything that is obnoxious to his holy law; and all our errors are written down against us until the whole is wiped away by an abundant pardon through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Our sins are as the countless horde of locusts which descend upon the fertile land and devour everything, leaving nothing for man but famine and despair. But as it was in Egypt so it is at this day; the Lord commands the wind of mercy to blow every locust from off the face of the land, and as they all depart at once our hearts rejoice and are glad. Our sins are countless as the drops of dew in these autumn mornings when every leaf is wet, for every tree is weeping tears of sorrow over the dying year; and yet when the sun has risen, with a little of his heat the moisture is gone, the dews are all exhaled, they are as if they had never been. So countless are our sins, and so complete is the removal of our transgressions when the infinite love of Jesus shines upon us, and God in his Son has reconciled us by his atoning blood. Innumerable sins are forgiven by one word from the life of divine love.

In the fourth place, we can see the truth of this in *the abundant sin of those sins which are pardoned*. Just think of the abundant sinfulness of any one transgression; for every sin has a myriad sins in its bowels. Did you ever find a spider's nest just when the young spiders have all come to life, it is a city of spiders; now, such is any one sin, it is a colony of iniquities, a living mass of offence. You have but to stir it, and you will see countless sins running out of it: it is an aggregation of evils. I remember once studying with much care various works upon the sin of Adam, and I was convinced by each writer that it was a different sin, and came at last to the conclusion that the sin of Adam, simple as it was, had all sorts of sins hidden within it. Sin is not only a double flower, but it blooms sevenfold, it is a complicated mischief, in a thousand ways abhorrent to the holy God, and yet he pardons it! abundantly pardons it!

Some sins are plotted and planned and performed with presumptuous deliberation, so that when the act itself is perpetrated it is only one part of a whole mass of transgression. The man has first to consider how to do it, and there is sin in the consideration. If it were a sin of revenge, for instance, the anger which first suggested it was a sin: then the malice which preyed upon the supposed injury and turned it over was sin, and then the prostitution of wit and wisdom to the scheming of some cunning mode of vengeance—all this was sin. Many a sin is a development from a long succession of sins, and may have a genealogy far longer than the pedigree of the man himself, and be intensely full of sin all along. Some sins have in them strange contradictory mixtures. We have known men sin from pride and covetousness, and yet fall into that which was at once mean

and ruinous to their hope of gain. We have seen self-righteousness and lust riding on the same saddle. What art thou, O sin! A monster of forms uncouth and contrary! I see thee one moment as an angel of light, and the next thou art a fiend, black as the midnight of Gehenna! Thou grovellest like a serpent, and anon thou shinest like a seraph! Thou art "all things to all men," if by any means thou mayest deceive some and cast them down into the pit! Yet this vile thing the Lord forgives to men for Jesus' sake! Does he not abundantly pardon?

In addition to there being many sins in one sin, I want you to remember how much virus of sin we sometimes manage to stow away in a sin. A man has done wrong and smarted for it, yet he does the very same thing again wilfully, against his own conscience and against the warning he has received. A man will sometimes acknowledge what a fool he has been, and yet play the fool again. Some men sin for no motive whatever—for mere wantonness of sin. It is very astonishing to read in the newspapers of crimes that persons will sometimes fall into, who appear to have had no inducement to do so at all—persons in good circumstances, who might have purchased readily enough the very things they steal. This increases guilt, and makes sin by far the more heinous, if we do it in sheer wilfulness. If any of us have been blessed with a tender conscience, and with pious training, have heard the sound preaching of the gospel, and have had light and knowledge, if we go deliberately into sin, there is in that sin a degree of obnoxiousness to God which is not to be found in the transgressions of the poor and the ignorant, who have lived in darkness and scarcely know what they do. Yet, sins against light and knowledge God pardons; deliberate and presumptuous sins he forgives; blasphemous, impudent and provoking sins; sins that would otherwise sink us low as the lowest hell, his mighty mercy sweeps away in one single moment, when we believe in Jesus Christ. At the foot of the cross not merely sins vanish that are a little stain upon us, but the deep and double crimson of deliberate guilt, and the staring scarlet of gross iniquity, all disappear when we are washed in the "fountain filled with blood," which is open for sin and for uncleanness. Abundance of sinners are forgiven the abundance of sins, and the abundance of the sin which lies in each one of the sins is removed. "He will abundantly pardon." Our text grows, does it not?

Let us notice next, that the Lord "abundantly pardons," when we consider *the abundant means of pardon which he has been pleased to provide for sinners*. It was not possible that God should so pardon sin as to leave a slur upon his moral government. If a judge sitting upon the bench should pass over great crimes without any kind of retribution, it would be a great misfortune to a country; for very soon crime would be regarded as a mere trifle. Leniency to the wicked would turn out to be cruelty to the just. When a man who commits violence in the streets has the lash used upon him, we may pity him if we like; but if that lash were not used we should have a greater need to pity those good and honest citizens who are half killed when they are seeking their homes at nightfall. A judge must never so pass by offences as to increase them. God will not show pardon in such a way that men

shall think lightly of sin, or question the vigour of his justice. What, then, was he to do? Why, he must provide a way by which he can be "just and yet the justifier of the ungodly." And he did provide it. His own Son became the substitute for the guilty, and in their room and stead he suffered the wrath of God for man; so that now the severity of God is upheld in the death of Jesus, and the mercy of God in the forgiveness of those for whom he died.

Now, that there is abundant pardon may be clearly seen from the fact that the substitute was not an angel, was no creature of bounded power and merit; but he who came to save us was none other than God himself—"very God of very God." The fountain filled for us to wash in, is not a fountain which can only cleanse a little and then will be exhausted of its virtues. The Son of God has filled it from his pierced heart, and the merit of the atoning blood is without limit. There was a limit to the purpose for which it was shed, for he loved his church, and gave himself *for it*; but it is blasphemous to imagine that there is any boundary to the merit of the atonement itself. There is in the sacrifice of the Son of God a degree of power which seraphim cannot conceive. Were all the stars worlds, and were they all filled with myriads of inhabitants who had revolted against God, if an atonement had been wanted for them all, it is not within my power to conceive that a greater atonement could be required for the whole host of creatures than that which Christ presented upon the cross. The boundless merit of it, therefore, makes us rejoice, for our God "will abundantly pardon." Sinner, if there had been a little Saviour, you might have despaired. Sinner, if the Saviour had offered a small sacrifice, if there had been but a narrow degree of merit in his agonies and cries, I might have spoken to you with bated breath; but now I know he is "able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him;" and, therefore, I am warranted to declare to you that God, even our God—in Christ Jesus "will abundantly pardon." May God send these things home to the hearts of those who are labouring under a sense of guilt.

And now I must notice, in the sixth place, the *abundant ease of the terms of pardon*. When a man says he will forgive another and does not mean it, he puts hard conditions, and says, "I will forgive him under certain circumstances, if he does this, and if he does that." This is not abundant pardon. It is a little niggardly spirit of forgiveness; in fact, it is no forgiveness at all. But look how God puts it. Does he say to a man, "I will forgive you if you weep for seven years, or do penance for a lifetime"; or "I will forgive you if you bring so much gold or silver, or promise this or promise that"? No, no, no. It is hearty forgiveness, and therefore the terms are simple and easy. When I say "terms" I merely use the word from want of a better, for indeed the terms are no terms at all. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." That is all! No man can expect to be forgiven if he goes on with his sin. You cannot expect God to pardon that which you continue to provoke him with. That were absurd. The sin must be given up. The gospel says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and

thou shalt be saved," **you** cannot expect a medicine to cure you if you will not take it; neither **can** you expect God to pardon you if you will not accept pardon from his Son Jesus Christ. So that all that he asks is that you do **ask**, and are willing to receive; and even that he gives you, for the power to pray, to repent, and to believe, all come from him; and though he bids men believe, and so makes it a duty, yet he gives them faith, and so makes it a privilege. What a God he is! He gives to his enemies, to the rebellious, to revolvers that go aside more and more, that which makes them repent of their sin and believe in his Son; and this puts their sin for ever behind his back, and casts it into the depths of the sea. "He will abundantly pardon."

Observe, again, the *abundance of this pardon may be seen in the fulness of it*. God's pardons are no shams, no superficialities. "He will abundantly pardon"—that is to say, he will *really* pardon. Have you that are pardoned never asked yourselves this question, "Is it really true? Can it be so? Am I really forgiven?" Yes, it is true. God does not pretend to forgive; he does not play at pardoning. When once he says, "*Absolve te*," he does indeed absolve. The forgiveness is valid; it is valid on earth in the court of conscience, and above in the court of heaven. The pardoned sinner is truly pardoned, and no one shall ever condemn him. His sin is not merely supposed to be gone, it is gone. It is not put a little way off from him, but "as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." "I will cast their iniquities into the depths of the sea," saith he. "I will cast them behind my back," is another of his strong expressions. Ah, soul! if thou believest in Jesus, thy sins do not exist; for it is written, "He hath finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness." And here is the consequence of it—that when God puts away sin he so abundantly pardons that he even imputes righteousness to those who were unrighteous. He doth not impute sin, but he doth give to us the righteousness of Christ, with which we are rendered acceptable in his sight, and Christ Jesus is made unto us "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Our Lord does nothing by halves. He found us black, he washes us white: we are naked and he clothes us.

"And lest even shadow of a spot
Should on our souls be found,
He took the robe the Saviour wrought,
And cast it all around."

For filth there is washing, for nakedness dress, for deformity adornment, for uncomeliness beauty, for all our possible wants a boundless supply. Is not this pardon plenteous, when we see what is bound up with it?

I am sure I do not know how to speak well enough of this glorious pardon which our God gives. One point is always full of joy to me; and that is, that it is irreversible. Those whom the Lord forgives he never condemns. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He does not play fast and loose with his creatures—forgive to-day and condemn to-morrow. Once let him blot out the sin, the sin is gone *for ever*. "If they search for it, it shall not be found;

yea, it shall not be, saith the Lord." How I delight to preach about everlasting salvation and irreversible pardon. My God and King changeth not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed, and the covenant blessings are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

Once more only. There is so much to say that I am obliged to multiply particulars.

The eighth point is, he doth "abundantly pardon," because of *the abundant blessings which attend that pardon*. See how he takes the poor imprisoned soul out of bondage and delivers it, takes off every chain from its hands and feet, and makes it rejoice in Christ Jesus. Oh, you that have once been set in the stocks of conviction on account of sin, and made to cry out in your sore bondage, you now know, since you are forgiven, what the glorious liberty of the children of God is. You are not now in "duration vile," but being justified by faith you have peace with God through Jesus Christ your Lord.

The Lord gives us freedom from the power as well as from the guilt of sin. Those dear lips of Christ are put to the wounds of our sin to suck the poison out, lest the virus of our old transgressions should breed a fresh disease. The blessed dove descends with a healing branch from the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, and our soul is made to seek after holiness till it perfects it in the fear of God. This is abundant pardon indeed! If a king were to forgive rebels it were great mercy certainly, but to take those rebels and make them his friends that is more abundant mercy. Then to adopt them and make them his children; ay, to put coronets on their heads, and make them kings and priests in his empire, this were abundant pardon indeed! To take the rebels and provide them royal sustenance; place them at his table; educate and train them; admit them to his palace; grant their requests; commune with them, and take them into his palace with him; that would be an abundant pardon! And yet all this God does for sinners. He makes them his children; he hears their prayers; he gives them fellowship with himself and his dear Son; he employs them in offices of trust; sets them about bringing their fellow sinners to himself; and, by-and-by, he takes them home to heaven, where they shall dwell for ever at his right hand in all the bliss and glory of his only-begotten Son. Oh, is not this abundantly to pardon?

I would to God some seraph could descend with burning tongue to take my place and speak to you this morning on such a theme as this; but no; perhaps I am a better speaker to you in such a case, for—

"Never did angels taste above
Redeeming grace and dying love."

But I have tasted it. This forgiveness is mine to day; and I rejoice in it; and, as I preach it to you, I preach that which I do know, and set before you that which I have enjoyed. Oh, that others may come and participate in this amazing pardon—this boundless forgiveness of boundless sin!

II. We shall consider next, very briefly, what are THE INFERENCES WHICH FLOW OUT OF ABUNDANT PARDON. The first inference is this:

There is no room for anybody to despair. If there be here this morning one who has been a drunkard, a man of filthy and unclean life, a thief, or worse, if worse can be, there is no reason why he should despair. Suppose I were only able to say this morning, "God does pardon *sometimes some few sinners*"; there are a few people who have been guilty of great sin, who have been forgiven, and are in heaven." Why, if men were in their senses they would find hope even in this, and would exclaim, "Who can tell? Who can tell? Perhaps he will pardon us?" Even on such a slender thread as that they would hang a hope, and if they were wise they would go and seek mercy. Jonah could only go through Nineveh and say, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" Nothing about mercy—not a word of it. But the people of Nineveh said, "Who can tell? He may turn from his fierce anger that we perish not;" and on the strength of "Who can tell?" they tried it, and the God of mercy spared the guilty city. Oh, poor sinner! if you had only a "Who can tell?" it were worth while to go and try it. But look at my text; there is no "Who can tell?" in it. "He will abundantly pardon." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts," for it must be heart-work—"and let him turn unto the Lord"—let him seek his face by repentance and faith, that is the meaning—"and He will abundantly pardon." The Lord has great mercy for great sinners. I will set the big bell a ringing, and I will let it ring and ring again, "Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome, for the great gates are set wide open! The tables are long, and the oxen and fatlings upon them are plentiful, and myriads are coming! Come along with you!" The great bell rings out again, "Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome! for He will abundantly pardon." Would God some soul would hear the proclamation of this best of news, and fly to Christ for pardon this very day!

Another inference from my subject is this—that *there is a loud call to every one who has not repented to do so*; for who would be so base as to offend so good, so kind a Lord? I think that ought to touch each man's heart. Here is one whom you have offended; you think he is very angry, and you feel very angry too, and you offend therefore again; you count him an enemy, and you keep up the quarrel, and you do more mischief to him, you damage his estate, and speak against his reputation. You suppose that all this while he is preparing to deal a very heavy blow at you, and avenge the injuries he has sustained. So you grow more angry still, and hate him more and more. You chew the cud of malice, and you get such bitterness out of it that you become worse and worse; until you find one day that you have been mistaken all along. A friend meets you and says, "Why do you speak so ill of your neighbour?" "I hate him, abhor him." "What for?" says the other. "Do you know that when he hears of all that you do he only says, 'I am very sorry for him: I never did him any hurt, and I never will.' Do you know he has often done you great service? You were in debt, and you would have been in prison, only he called and paid your debts for you. When you were very ill he sent the physician to you; although you never knew that he sent him,

was so, and you were restored. Do you know that he has been buying an estate for you against the time of your trouble which is creeping upon you, and he has settled it in your name, and entailed it upon you, and he means that you shall live in a mansion for ever?" The man says, "I never thought that: I could not have believed it, and I do not believe it now." "Yet it is true," replies the other. "Does he know of all that I have done against him?" "Oh yes! He has been behind the door often, and heard you call him all sorts of bad names." "What did he say then?" All he said, was, "Poor soul! I will be sorry for what he did one of these days, when he knows me better." "Do you mean to say that is all he said?" "Yes." "But did he not grow red in the face, and threaten a law-suit, or anything of that kind?" "No: he said he should win you one of these days, when you came to know him." Now, I am sure if you had thus treated any one of your fellow-creatures you would be ashamed of yourself, and want to hide your face. Would you not? If you then received an invitation from the person whom you had so badly treated, would he said, "You need not have any fear to come; I shall never say a word of upbraiding to you as long as you live." "Well," you would say, "bad as my nature is, I will go and make it up with him." So pray God that he may plead with you ungodly ones and turn you to himself. What hurt has God ever done you? His laws—is there anything wrong in them? Are they hard, harsh, severe? They are only meant for your good. They are nothing but danger signals, telling us not to hurt ourselves. Would God we would not persist in going where we should not.

God has prepared for some of you full, unqualified forgiveness, and means to bring you to himself, and bless you and carry you safely to heaven. Oh, hold not out against him, but yield by mighty grace subdued. Can you resist its charms? Come now and reason with God while he thus reasons with you. Let your conscience say, "Lord, thou art full of mercy. We come to thee. We would be reconciled to thee through the death of thy Son." God grant that the words of the text may have power with many of you.

Another inference is this. *If there is anybody in this house the text specially calls this morning, it is the biggest sinner here;* because there cannot be abundant pardon where there is not abundant sin. If any one here feels that he or she is an abundant sinner, you are the person this text is meant for. Where are you, dear soul? Away back there in the fog? My Master calls you. "He will abundantly pardon." Mary! You who have been a Magdalene, you are the woman! John, there! you who have been a persecutor, and an opposer of the gospel, you are the man! There is room for abundant pardon in you. You that have never cared for God or devil, you who feel your hearts so hard and stubborn that you think you can never be saved, you are the very people the text is for; for there is room for abundant mercy in you. While my text invites each sinner it has a special finger with which to beckon this morning to those who have abundant sin—"Come hither, come hither, come hither; for the Lord will abundantly pardon."

Now, for such a forgiving God as this we ought in return to have

great love. If he "abundantly pardons" we ought to be abundantly grateful.

"Love I much, I've more forgiven;
I'm a miracle of grace."

You believe God has done much for you: never think you can do too much for him. Black sinners, when they get saved, make the fairest saints. In proportion as they earnestly rebelled, they throw the same vigour often into the service of God, and become desperately in earnest for that dear Lord who loved them, and gave himself for them.

But to close, dear friends. What if that mercy should be slighted? What if there should be such abundant mercy, and it should be rejected? What if we do despite to the mercy of God, and to the blood of his dear Son? Those that are unwilling to be forgiven doubly deserve to be left to their own deserts. If God speaks you fair and you will not have him, you must not wonder if by-and-by he changes his note. The lamp holds out to burn, and while it burns you may have mercy. It will soon burn out, remember! The longest life is short, and after that there will be no further mercy, no terms of grace. The mercy seat will be gone, and the judgment throne will fill its place. Oh, if God only gave us five minutes to find mercy in, surely, if we were not fools, we should avail ourselves of it; but while he has lingered with some of you for fifty years, and still lingers, do not provoke him; but "to-day if you will hear his voice harden not your hearts," but turn unto him. Oh, may the Spirit of God turn you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah i. 10—20;
xliii. 22—28; xlviii. 1—11.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."—Galatians iii. 24-5.

NEITHER the Jewish law of ten commands, nor its law of ceremonies was ever intended to save anybody. It was not the intent of the ceremonial law in itself to effect the redemption of the soul: by a set of pictures it set forth the way of salvation, but it was not itself the way. It was a map, not a country, a model of the road, not the road itself. The blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, could not really take away sin. These sacrifices and offerings were but types of the great sacrifice which in due time was presented by the true priest. There was no inherent virtue in the victims that were slain, nor in the services that were observed by the worshippers! Those sacred rites were intended to portray to the minds of the people the real sacrifice which was in the fulness of time to be offered by our Lord Jesus Christ, but they could do nothing more. The king's portrait is not himself, the engraving of a banquet is not the feast itself, and so the grand old ceremonial law was a shadow of good things to come, but contained not the substance of spiritual blessings.

Neither was the moral law of ten commands proclaimed on Mount Sinai ever given with the view of sinners being saved by it. When that law was announced by God, he knew that every one to whom he gave that law had already broken it, and that consequently they could not keep its precepts, or claim justification by their conformity to its requirements. He never intended it to be a way of salvation. Hundreds of years before he had revealed his covenant of grace and the way of life to his servant Abraham, and the law was not meant to disannul the ancient promise. To look at the law as a Saviour is to place Sinai in the place of Zion, and so to misuse and abuse the law. It was sent forth quite a different purpose, as we shall presently try to show you. It was sent to be our schoolmaster till Christ came—the schoolmaster

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of a world in its minority, that had need to be under tutelage until it attained full age, which would not happen until Christ should be born of a woman, and the doctrine of salvation by faith in him should be fully preached and known.

Now I shall try and show, first, *the office of the law*; then, secondly, *the design of that office*—"to bring us to Christ;" and, thirdly, *the termination of that office*: "After that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

I. We begin with **THE OFFICE OF THE LAW**. It is to be a schoolmaster. Here I must endeavour to explain the figure. A schoolmaster nowadays is not at all like the personage Paul intended. He speaks of a *pedagogue*, an official seldom if ever now seen among men. This was not a person who actually officiated as master in the school, and gave instruction in the school itself; but one—a slave generally—who was set to take the boys to school, and to watch over them, and to be a sort of general supervisor of them, both in school and out of school, and at all times. A pedagogue was very generally employed in the training of the young; indeed, it was a common and customary thing for the sons of the Greek and Roman nobility to have appointed over them some trustworthy servant of the family who took them in charge. The boys were entirely under these servants; and thus had their spirits broken in, and their vivacity restrained. As a rule, these pedagogues were very stern and strict—they used the rod freely, not to say cruelly, and the condition of the boys was sometimes no better than slavery. The boys (as it was supposed to be for their good) were kept in perpetual fear. Their recreations were restricted; even their walks were under the surveillance of the grim pedagogues. They were sternly held in check in all points, and were thus disciplined for the battle of life. As for the young women, they also had some elderly woman of grim appearance who tried to keep them out of mischief, and suppress anything like cheerfulness or girlish glee. It was considered necessary for young people that they should suffer from rigid discipline and bear the yoke in their youth; so they were all put under pedagogues, whoever they might be,—pedagogues armed with penalties but devoid of sympathies.

Now Paul, taking up this thought, which was his idea in the word "schoolmaster," says the law was our pedagogue, our guardian, our custodian, ruler, tutor, governor until Christ came.

Well, then, what is the business of the law as a pedagogue? The business of the law is, first, *to teach us our obligations to God*. Let us ask ourselves if we have ever heard the law teaching us in that way. Brethren, read the law of ten commands, and study each separate precept, and you will find that in those ten short precepts you have all the moral virtues, the full compass of your accountability to God, and of your relationship to your fellow-men. It is a wonderful condensation of morals. The essence of all just decrees and statutes lies there. Perfection is there photographed, and holiness mapped out. No one has ever been able to add to it without creating an excrescence, not a word could be taken from it without causing a serious omission. It is the perfect law of God, and tells us exactly what we ought to be; if we are in any degree deficient, we are to that extent guilty before God. Now, when the law comes to a man's conscience, it reveals

in the divine standard of right—holds it up before him—makes him look at it—and apprizes him that the commandments do not merely refer to acts and deeds, but with equal force to the words and thoughts whence they proceed. I warrant you it is a humbling day when a man gets to understand that for every idle word that he has spoken he will be brought to account; and when he hears again that his senses and imaginations will all come under divine scrutiny. A startled is the purest mind when it understands that whosoever hath lusted upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart, so that even glances of the eye and thoughts of the heart are offences of the law. The law of God takes cognisance of the entire nature, and reveals the evil which lurks in every faculty. A mere imagination of sin is sinful—the very conception of it, albeit we should reject it, and never carry it into act, would still be a stain upon our minds, and render us impure before the thrice holy God. This is one of the first works of the law—to show us what spotless holiness it demands, and to reveal to us the matchless perfection which we can meet its requirements. He who has once gazed upon the shining light of legal holiness will tremble at the memory of it, and cover himself in dust and ashes as he feels how far short of it he falls. Having done that, the law acts as a schoolmaster next by *showing us our sinfulness*. We are naturally prone to account ourselves very good. Our own opinion of ourselves is seldom too low; most generally it is a rather high one; but just as a stern pedagogue would rebuke a boy who was getting a little proud, "Come along, sir; I will take you down a little;" so the law takes us down. It says, "Look at that precept; you have not kept that; and consider this precept, for you appear to have forgotten it." "Look," says the law, "you talk about your holiness; but have you loved the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your might? And have you loved your neighbour as yourself?" And then, when conscience, who is a great friend of this pedagogue, replies, "Indeed I have done nothing of the kind," the conviction of sin comes home to the soul, and sadness reigns. You will tell me, "This is very unpleasant—to be made to feel that you are sinful." Ay, but it is very necessary, there is no getting to Christ in any other way. Christ died for sinners, and if you are not sinners, what interest can you have in his death? why should you think that he died for you? You must be convinced of your sinfulness before you can possibly realise the value of the need of salvation. It is the business of the law to lay before you a straight line, that you may see your crooks, and put before you the standard of gold, that you may discern the humbling fact that what you thought to be pure metal is only so much worthless dross. It is the business of this pedagogue to bring you down, to humble you, and make you feel how sinful you have been. When the law has carried our education thus far, its next business is to *sweep away all our excuses*, and stop our mouths as to all self-justifying pleas. Did you ever know a boy without an excuse? I never did. I think I never knew a girl either. We all make excuses readily enough. But those rough, surly pedagogues always answered the boy's apologies by giving the offender an extra stroke of the whip for

law to impose upon his guardian; and that is what the law does with us. The law says, "We have not done exactly as we ought, but then think of your human nature!" Ah! how often we make that excuse, and the law says, "I have nothing to do with the poverty of human nature. This is what God commands, and if you do not obey you will surely be cast away for ever from his presence." The law makes no distinction of us because of fallen human nature; and what is more, when the law comes with power to a man's conscience he does not plead his poor human nature, for of all pleas that is one of the most infamous. A man will say, "Well, I know I drank to intoxication, but this is merely gratifying an instinct of human nature." Now, suppose that this drunkard when he gets sober falls into the hands of a thief, will he not give the rogue in charge to a policeman? But what if the rogue be set up that it was human nature robbed him. At what he will say about it. Says he, "I will get human nature sorted up in twelve months if I can." He does not recognise any excuse about human nature when any one does wrong to him; and he knows in his very soul, that there is no valid defence in such a plea when he does wrong to God. What if human nature be bad? This only proves that the man ought to be punished the more. A man steals, and the Lord Mayor to-morrow morning; he is brought up on a stool charged with having picked somebody's pocket, and he says, "My Lord Mayor, I ought to be forgiven, for the fact is, it is my nature to steal. I have stolen so long that whenever I see a pocket I have a disposition to put my hand into it; such is the infirmity of my nature." What does the Lord Mayor say? He replies very gravely, "Why, I see that it is not merely in actions that you are guilty, but your very nature is poisoned with dishonesty. I shall give you a double punishment: your plea is no excuse, but an aggravation." When the law comes it sweeps all excuses away, and makes us be low before, false, and even wicked they are. Men, like boys, will say that circumstances were such that they could not help doing this; but the law, like a stern pedagogue, says, "I have nothing to do with circumstances. Whatever your circumstances are, there is your duty, and you have not done it, and, not having done it, you shall be punished for your offence." Where does Moses, in the twelfth chapter of Exodus, speak about exonerating or even excusing circumstances? God spake all these words, saying, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." That is to say, not under any circumstances. "Thou shalt not steal," not under any circumstances. Circumstances are not taken into account, the law sweeps that excuse away, and makes men speechless before the judgment-seat.

Many transgressors argue, "Well, but I have not done worse than other people;" to which the law replies, "What hast thou to do with other people? Each individual must stand or fall on his own account before the law. The law is to thee. If another has broken it

he shall be punished even as thou shalt, inasmuch as thou hast broken it." Then the man cries, "But I have been better than others." But, says the law, "If thou hast not perfectly walked in all the ways of the Lord thy God to do them, I have nothing to do with comparing thee with others: for this is my sentence, 'Cursed is every man that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.'" Now, my dear hearers, these are not my words, they are the words of God by his servant Moses, and there they stand like a flaming sword, turning every way, and blocking up the legal road to the tree of life. Conscience, when it is really awakened by the law, confesses herself condemned, and ceases to uphold her plea of innocence. How can it be otherwise when the law is so stern? Then, peradventure, the man will say, "I mean to do better in the future;" to which the law replies, "What have I to do with that? It is already due that thou shouldst be perfect in the future; and if thou shouldst be perfect, in what way would that wipe out thine old offences? Thou hast only done what thou oughtest to have done." But the man cries, "I do repent of having done wrong." "Ay," says the law, "but I have nothing to do with repentance." There is no provision in the ten commands for repentance. Cursed is the man that breaks the law; and that is all that the law has to say to him. Over the top of Sinai there were flames exceeding bright, and a trumpet sounded exceeding loud, but there were no drops of the rain of pity there. Storm and tempest, thunderings and lightnings appalled the people, so that they trembled in the camp, and such must be the sights and sounds we witness as long as we are under the law.

Having thus swept away excuses, this pedagogue does the next thing which the pedagogues did to the boys. It begins to *chide us and to hasten us*. And it *will* chide too. I know it. I had the law frowning and shaking its fist at me for years before I got from under it. Glad enough was I to escape from it, for well do I remember the weight of its cudgel—that cudgel of crabtree of which John Bunyan speaks. I warrant you it can give you sore bones, so that you cannot lie down upon the bed of your self-confidence to take rest. "Why," says the law, "thou hast done this, and that, and the other, and thou knowest thou hast; thou hast sinned against light, and against knowledge, and against conscience, and against love, and against mercy;" and every one of these brings another blow from the great rod, till we are all wounds and bruises, and we seem to ourselves to be covered with putrefying sores. The law will serve us as the pedagogue did the boy—it will accompany and follow us up everywhere. The old pedagogue went with the boy to the play-ground: he did not let him play in peace. He went upstairs to bed with him: he did not let him go to sleep without a last frown; and he woke him up in the morning much earlier than he liked to be awakened, and made him come out of his bed, whether he liked it or not. He could never go anywhere without this pedagogue with him, poor child. And so it is when the law gets hold of a man—really gets hold of him. Does he go to the theatre to find pleasure in sin? the law will go with him there and make him feel more wretched there than when he was at home. He may get

among the frivolous, and try to sing some old song to get rid of his feelings, but the more he tries to drown his misery, the more the dark forebodings come before his mind. He cannot rest. The law keeps on saying, "What are you doing now? Why, you are only going from bad to worse." The law also smites the awakened conscience again and again, and frightens him with what is soon to come. "Suppose you were to die where you now are," says the law; "suppose you were now to appear before your Maker, unforgiven, where would you be?" Perhaps in this kind of feeling a man goes to the house of God. The law follows him there. If the preacher preaches a comforting sermon, the law says, "This is not for you. You have nothing to do with that. You are under my government, not under Christ." The sweeter the promise, the more bitter will be the taste of the sermon in the poor sinner's mouth; for the law says, "You have broken my injunctions; you have violated my statutes. There is nothing for you but eternal punishment—to be driven for ever from the presence of God." "Hard lines," say you. You do not like this pedagogue. No, nor did I, when I was under him. Glad was I when the day came that I was of age.

Do you see what the drift of it all is? Why, the drift of it is to make you despair of being saved by your good works, and to make you feel that you can do nothing right apart from Jesus. You are forced by the law to cry out, "Why, I cannot do anything right. I have tried and failed; I have tried again and have failed. I thought I was going to improve myself into an angel, but I seem to be worse every day. I thought surely the law would have smiled on me and said, 'That is well done,' but when I have done my best I am still condemned, I am allowed no peace." No, dear soul, and if God means to save you, you never will have any peace till you come to Christ. The man whom God does not intend to save is often left without the law, to enjoy his portion in this life as best he may. What is the use of worrying that man? He may as well have peace in this life, for he will never see the face of the Lord in heaven. But the Lord's elect are made to feel the rod, and by that rod they are so beaten that they are driven out of all heart and confidence in themselves, and made to turn away to Jesus, to find salvation by some better method than by their own works. The law is our schoolmaster to whip us to Christ—our pedagogue to flog us and beat us till we are heartily sick of self, and look for our hope and confidence to some other source.

II. Thus I have shown you the office of the law, and I have entrenched upon the second head, which is, THE DESIGN OF THIS OFFICE.

The law is not intended to conduct any man to despair. "But did not you say it was, just now?" No, I did not. I said it was sent to drive a man to despair of himself. That is the despair which hails the gospel, and the sooner we have it the better; it would be quite another matter if we were driven to despair absolutely.

Brethren, the law says, "You shall not indulge the hope of being saved by me. I will whip it out of you." And it does this effectually, but it is not meant that the man should say, "Well, if I cannot be saved by my works there is no hope of my being saved at all." Oh,

no! it is that he may then ask, "What *must* I do to be saved?" and may get this answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Its office is not to urge us to make an amalgam of works and faith, as some suppose. There are those who say, "I cannot keep the law, but if I believe in Jesus, then the blood of Jesus will make up for my sins and deficiencies." That is not the way of salvation. Nobody will ever get to heaven that way. If you have any engagements with the law, you must pay it twenty shillings in the pound. It will not take a composition of any sort whatever, you must satisfy its utmost demands, or it will give you no rest, either in time or in eternity. If you say to the law, "I will give you so much in works and so much in grace," the law does not deal in that way, it must be paid by a legal tender of current coin of the king's realm. It demands works, and it will have nothing but works, and those absolutely perfect, and in full tale and measure. The law repudiates amalgamation, and so does the gospel of free grace. If you have anything to do with Jesus, you must get right away from your own good works; I mean from all reliance upon them, and come to rest in him, and him alone, for it never will be Christ and company. He will save from top to bottom, from first to last, or else not at all. Not a drop of his blood and then a drop of your tears; not a work from Christ and then a work from you. Oh no! Such hideous patchwork cannot be endured. It is not the object of the law to drive you to a compromise.

But its object is this—to make you accept salvation as the free gift of God—to make you stand and own that you are a sinner, and accept a free, full, perfect forgiveness, according to the infinite grace of the eternal Father. The law is meant to keep you always holding on to salvation by grace. For my part, I cannot bear that preaching which is partly law and partly grace. I have had enough of the law. If you had known five years of its rigor—five years discipline of the pedagogue—you would never want to see even his back any more. When a man once knows what law-work is in his soul, he knows the difference between that and the gospel, and he will not have linsey-woolsey: he wants to have the pure white linen all of one material, and that material free grace. It must be not "Yea, nay," but "Yea, yea,"—grace, grace, all grace, nothing but grace, and not grace and works, not Moses and Christ, but Jesus only; the grace must be pure and unadulterated. It is a grand thing when this schoolmaster makes a man stick to grace, and so flogs and whips him that he never wants to go back to the law any more; for, brethren, nobody is so happy in the liberty of Christ as the man who has thoroughly known the bondage of the law. I think I have repeated to you a story my old friend Dr. Alexander Fletcher once told me. He said he was passing by the Old Bailey, or some other of our gaols, and he saw a couple of boys turning somersaults, standing on their heads, making wheels of themselves, and all sorts of things, and he stopped and said, "Why, boys, whatever are you at? You seem to be delighted;" and one of them said, "Ay, and you would be delighted too if you had been locked up in that gaol three months. You would jump when you came out." And the good old doctor said, he thought it was very likely he should.

If he had been a prisoner there he should hardly know how to express his delight in getting out. Now, if a man has been once pommelled by the law, if he has felt his sin and misery, and the impossibility of obtaining any relief by the way of human merit, when he comes to see that Christ has kept the law for him, comes to know that he is saved, and saved perfectly by an act of faith in Jesus Christ, that henceforth he lives under new conditions, and is not under the law but under grace, he is the man to know the sweets of liberty, because aforetime the iron had entered into his soul. He is the man to kiss the emancipator's feet, for was he not heavily ironed in the days of his former estate?

This, then, is the design of the law—to make us sick of self and fond of Christ, to condemn us that we may accept free grace, to empty us that God may fill us, to strip us that God may clothe us, in a word, to kill us that Christ may make us alive.

III. Now to our last point—THE TERMINATION OF THE LAW'S OFFICE. When does it terminate?

The text says, "But after that faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster." We come to believe in Jesus, and then the pedagogue troubles us no more. No, there is a great change in his behaviour. When the young Roman, or we will say a young Hebrew, who had come under the Greek law, was under thirteen and a-half years old, this pedagogue was always beating, and cuffing, and buffeting him for his faults; but when he was a day over the time, then, according to the law, he was free from the tutelage of the pedagogue. Do you think the pedagogue struck him that morning? He knew better. He had whipped him yesterday, but now he must know his master, and render him another sort of service. The lad is come to his full age, and is under other regulations. Under the old Roman law a man was not of full age till he was twenty-five. According to that law the pedagogue might be insulting and domineering over him when he was three or four-and-twenty; but when his young master had come of age he changed his talk altogether; matters wore another phase. And so when a man becomes a believer he has come of age, and the schoolmaster's rule is over, he is no longer under his former tutors and governors, for his time of liberty appointed by the Father is come. He is not under the pedagogy of the law any longer, for Christ's work has set him entirely free therefrom.

Certainly, a man sees the office of the law as pedagogue ended when he ascertains that Christ has fulfilled it. I read the ten commands and say, "These thundered at me and I trembled at them, but Christ has kept them, kept them for me. He was my representative in every act of his obedient life and death, and before God it is as if I had kept the law, and I stand accepted in the Beloved. When Jesus Christ is seen of God, God sees his people in him, and they are justified through his righteousness, because they have faith in him. "He that believeth in him is not condemned." Oh, is it not a thousand mercies in one that the grand old cannons of the law are no longer turned against us? Christ has either spiked them or else turned them on our enemies, by fulfilling the law, so that they are on our side instead of against us.

The law ceases its office as schoolmaster when it comes to be written on our hearts. Boys have their lessons on slates, but men have their

their minds. We trust a man where we should carefully boy. When the child becomes a man his father and mother write down little rules for him, as they did when he was a child oats, neither do they set servants over him to keep him in He is trusted. His manliness is trusted; his honour is his best feelings are trusted. So now, brethren, we who ieved in Jesus have the law written here in our hearts, and it nds with what is written there in the Scriptures, and now ot say of a sin, "I am afraid to do that, for I should be did." We do not want to do it. We loathe it. And of a e do not say, "I must do that, or else I shall not be a child of No, we love to do it: we want to do it: the more of holiness er. We love the law of the Lord and desire to keep its unto the end. We no longer have, "Thou *shalt*" and "Thou t," constantly sounding in our ears as we did when we were ; but we are men in Christ Jesus, and now our sacred passions to run in the way of God's commandments; and if the old ebels grace is given to put it down: there is a daily conflict, new life that is within us cannot sin, because it is born of d it keeps down the old nature, so that we walk in the ways ousness after the example of our Lord. A warfare goes on, are no longer children; when faith is come, we are no longer schoolmaster. This is not Antinomianism, for we are not the law, but the law that once was on the stony table, and as broken, is now written on the fleshy tablet of a renewed and the Lord sweetly inclines us to keep his testimonies and his statutes.

over, we get free from the law when we take up our heirship t. I am afraid some Christians have never fully done this. I say, beloved, "I have believed in Jesus, and therefore I am h him. Whatever Christ is before God that I am, for I am er of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

'So near, so very near to God,
I cannot nearer be,
For in the person of his Son
I am as near as he.

So dear, so very dear to God,
I cannot dearer be,
The love wherewith he loves his Son,
Such is his love to me.'

I say, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered hings and sure? As long as Jesus lives I cannot die, for it is 'Because he lives, I shall live also.'

'My name from the palms of his hands
Eternity cannot erase,
Impressed on his heart it remains
In marks of indelible grace.'

man gets there, and knows that his standing does not depend elf, but that he is what he is in Christ, that Christ has done

everything for him, and **has** saved him, so that he can challenge every accuser in the words of Paul, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?"—when he gets there, then he can truly say that he **is** no longer under a schoolmaster. O brethren, read the eighth and ninth of Romans. Get into the spirit of the apostle when he rejoiced and triumphed in the complete salvation of Christ: get away from all beliefs that you have something still to do in order to save yourself; get to know that you have only to work out what God works in; with fear and trembling to fetch out from within, and show in your outward life, what God by the eternal Spirit works in your heart, and you will find that you are no longer under the law.

If there be any unconverted person here, and I am afraid there are a great many, I beseech you do not abide under the law, for the law can do nothing for you but curse you. Give up all hope of being saved by anything that you can do, and agree to be saved by what Christ has done. Plead guilty; plead guilty, and then God will say, "I absolve you." Plead guilty, and plead the blood of Jesus, and, this done, you are accepted in the Beloved.

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One;
There is life at this moment for thee,"

for every soul that will confess its guiltiness, and renounce all hope of self-salvation, and fly away to the wounds of Jesus.

And how shall I urge you, O Christian, never to go back to the law. Do not begin to judge yourself as if you were under the law. What if you are a sinner? It is true you are. Confess your sin and mourn over it; but remember there is a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness in the house of David. That sin of yours was laid on Christ before you committed it. It was laid on the scapegoat's head of old, and put away; and at this moment you are still clean in the sight of God through that great washing which you have received in the precious blood. Do not imagine that God will change his mind about you; he never did and never can change his mind. He has said concerning each soul that believes in his dear Son, "He that believeth in him is not condemned." Ye are complete in Christ Jesus, in him you have righteousness and strength, in him you may even glory. Get away from legal doctrines, and stand upon the gospel rock, and you will be happy and holy all your days.

Let me speak to those of you who are engaged in Christian service. When you try to teach others always keep the law in its proper place. I remember hearing a sermon from this text, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," in which the preacher so thoroughly missed the mark as to leave the inference upon the minds of his hearers that, after all, our good works and repentance would save us. Now, that is not the gospel; neither ought it to be preached as such. We preach up good works with all our might as the result of faith, as the outgrowth of faith, but not as the groundwork of salvation. We tell you that the tree of human nature must be altered first, or the fruit cannot be good. There will be no pears upon that crab-tree till you change the stock. Do not, therefore, go preaching to crab-trees and

them to bear pears and apples. We testify that Christ is able to change man's nature, and then good fruits will come as a matter of course: but I am afraid that in many Sunday-schools the children are taught a different doctrine, somewhat after this fashion—"Now, dearchildren, be very good, and obey your parents, and love Jesus, and you will be saved." That is not the gospel, and it is not true. Often do I hear it said, "*Love* Jesus, dear children." That is not the gospel. It is "*Trust* him"—"*Believe*." Not love, but faith is the saving grace; and that love of Jesus of a sentimental kind, which does not spring out of faith in him is a spurious emotion, a counterfeit of love, not at all the love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. The root of the matter is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved;" and that is the gospel for a child of two years of age, and the gospel for a man of a hundred. There is only one gospel for all that are born on the face of the earth—"Believe in Jesus." Not your doing, not your obeying the law; you have broken that; you have put yourself out of all possible hope in that direction; but your acceptance of what Christ has done will save you at once, save you for ever. But why should I multiply words? I know not how to put the whole matter in a simpler form, or to commend it more plainly to your understanding. It is not the mere exposition of a few verses of Scripture, or the clearing up of some small critical difficulty. Rather would I have you consider it a direction of vital importance to every seeking soul, a counsel of thrilling interest to every tried and exercised heart. Oh, how anxious I am to make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way! I wish that all of you, especially our young friends, would learn and often repeat that hymn of Dr. Watts, till it becomes indelibly fixed on their memory—

"The law commands and makes us know
What duties to our God we owe;
But 'tis the gospel must reveal
Where lies our strength to do his will.

"The law discovers guilt and sin,
And shows how vile our hearts have been;
Only the gospel can express
Forgiving love and cleansing grace.

"What curses doth the law denounce
Against the man that sins but once!
But in the gospel Christ appears,
Pardoning the guilt of numerous years.

"My soul, no more attempt to draw
Thy life and comfort from the law;
Fly to the hope the gospel gives,
The man that trusts the promise lives."

And remember, last of all, that the law which is so sharp and terrible to men when it only deals with them for their good, will if you and I die without being brought to Christ be much more terrible to us in eternity, when it deals with us in justice for our punishment. Then it will not be enshrined in the body of Moses, but, terrible to tell,

it will be incarnate in the person of the Son of God sitting upon the throne. He will be at once the Lawgiver, the Judge, and the Saviour; and you that have despised him as the Saviour will have to appear before him as your Judge. No such judge as he, his justice will be clear and undiluted now that his mercy has been scorned. Oil is soft, but set it on fire, and see how it burns! Love is sweet, but curdle it to jealousy, and see how sour it is! If you turn the Lamb of Zion into the Lion of the tribe of Judah, beware, for he will tear you in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver. Rejected love will change its hand. The pierced hand was outstretched with invitations of mercy, but if these be rejected—O sirs, I am telling you solemn truth, and hear it, I pray you, ere I send you away—if from that hand that was pierced you will not take the perfect salvation which he is prepared to give to all who confess their guilt, you will have to receive from that selfsame hand the blows of that iron rod which shall break you in pieces as a potter's vessel. Fly now, and kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Galatians iv.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE CLAIMS OF GOD.

A Sermon

LIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 11TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

Now ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we
res; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates
blessing, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and
his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting: and his truth
th to all generations."—Psalm c. 3, 4, 5.

BRETHREN, it is a trick of Satan to call off our minds from the most
important and vital matters by the suggestion of trivial considerations.
The best blessings are asking for our acceptance he will bring
most trifling things into our minds; he will fill our eyes with dust
prevent our looking to the brazen serpent for healing. From the
teaching of Jesus he endeavoured to distract human attention by
his teaching upon the tithing of mint and anise and cummin, the making
of the borders of one's garments, the wearing of phylacteries,
driving out of gnats, and I know not what beside. He followed
his method at Jacob's Well. When our Lord spoke to the woman
of the living water, and the salvation of her soul, the evil spirit
tempted her to ask concerning Gerizim and Zion: "Our fathers
dwelt in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem men ought
to worship." With this same art Satan worketh still. It should be
our business, not being ignorant of the devices of the enemy, to be
more than a match for him, by breaking away from all vain janglings
and frivolous questions to the foundation truths, the corner-stones of
the realities of life everlasting, the vitalities of godliness; and
to lie all Godward and Christward, away from the shadow land of
speculations, and the cloud wrack of vain speculations, over there to
the eternal rock and everlasting hills whose golden tops are, to the
faith, bright with the blessed daybreak. Let us get away there
this morning from the vanities of earth, and may the breath of the
Spirit speed us towards the realities of heaven, that to things essential
we may give the attention which is essential to them.

What were we created, my brethren? I know no better answer
than that of Job. 1, 197.

than that of the Assembly's catechism, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever." There is a vast amount both of theology and philosophy in that simple answer, which our old divines have put into the mouth of a child. Had man remained what God made him, it would have been his very element to glorify his God; to do the will of God would have been as natural to us as to breathe, if we had not fallen from original perfection. Creatures which abide as God created them obey his will, I was about to say unconsciously; but where there is consciousness there is added a supreme delight which makes their consciousness and willingness the highest boons. Look at yonder ponderous orbs; they are not stubborn with the so-called *vis inertiae*, but joyfully roll along in their predestined courses because God commands them to keep their settled track. See yonder watching stars: they close not their bright eyes, but smile upon us from age to age; those sentinels of heaven quench not their lamps, but shine right on day without night because God has said "Let there be light," and from them light must come.

We hear of no rebellion in the spheres, no revolt against the law which holds them to their celestial courses. Orion breaks not his bands, the Pleiades cease not their sweet influences. These orbs, mighty as they are, are as subservient to God as the plastic clay to the hand of the potter. And where there is intelligence, as long as the intelligence remains as God made it, there is no revolt against his will. You mighty angel "whose staff might make a mast for some tall admiral," counts it his honour to fly like a flash of light at the bidding of the Eternal. It is no demeaning of his dignity, it is no diminution of his pleasure, to do the commandment of the Most High, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Were we to-day what we should be, it would be our element to love, to serve, to adore our God, and we should not need ministers to stir us to our pleasurable duty or remind us of Jehovah's claims. Even the august language of our text would not be needed to bid us worship and bow down, and know that Jehovah is God, who has made us, and not we ourselves, for we should bear this truth in every particle of our being. As things are, however, we need recalling to duty and urging to obedience, and this morning, with the help of God's good Spirit, we will submit our hearts to such a call.

I. First we will consider THE CLAIMS OF GOD, ON WHAT ARE THEY GROUNDED? "Know ye that the Lord, he is God; it is he that hath made us and not we ourselves; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving." The claims of God are grounded, first of all, upon *his Godhead*. "Know ye that Jehovah, he is God." As Matthew Henry has very properly said, ignorance is not the mother of devotion, though it be the mother of superstition. True knowledge is the mother and the nurse of piety. Really to know the deity of God, to get some idea of what is meant by saying that he is God, is to have the very strongest argument forced upon one's soul for obedience and worship. The Godhead gave authority to the first law that was ever promulgated when God forbade man to touch the fruit of a certain tree. Why might not Adam pluck the fruit? Simply and only because God forbade it. Had God permitted, it had been lawful, God's prohibition made it sin to eat thereof. God

gave no reason for saying to Adam, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." His commandment, seeing he was God, was the supremest reason, and to have questioned his right, to make the law would have been in itself flat rebellion. God was to be obeyed simply because he was God. It was a case in which to have introduced an argument would have supposed unwillingness on man's part to obey. Adam could not want more than to know that such and such was the will of his God. This same truth of Godhead is the authoritative basis of the moral law of ten commands. From Sinai no claim for obedience was set up but this, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." In that word, "God," is comprehended the highest, the most weighty, the most righteous reasons for man's yielding up his entire nature to the divine service. Because the Lord is God therefore should we serve him with gladness, and come before his presence with singing.

It was upon this point that God tested Pharaoh, and Pharaoh may be regarded as a sort of representative of all the enemies of the Lord. "Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go." There was no reason given, no argument, but simply this, "Thus saith the Lord;" to which Pharaoh, fully appreciating the ground upon which God was acting, answered, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" So they stood foot to foot in fair battle, Jehovah saying, "Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go," and Pharaoh replying, "I know not the Lord neither will I let Israel go." You know how that battle ended. That song of Israel at the Red Sea when the Lord of hosts triumphed gloriously, was a prophecy of the victory which will surely come unto God in all conflicts with his creatures, in which his eternal power and Godhead are assailed.

The argument derived from the Godhead has not only been used with haughty rebels, but also with questioners and debaters. Observe how Paul speaks. He has entered upon the thorny subject of predestination, a matter which none of us will ever comprehend, a matter wherein it is better for us to believe than to reason, and he is met with this, "If all things happen as God decrees why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" to which the apostle gives no reply but this, "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Against God there can be no answer. If he wills it, so let it be. It is right, it is good because he so decrees. Is he God? Submit. If there were no other argument, or reason, let Godhead convince you.

Good men have been argued with in the same way for their profit. That is the core and pith of the Book of Job. There is Job in conflict with his three friends, who are arguing that he must be a wicked man or else God would not so sorely smite him; to which reasoning he replies that he will hold fast his integrity, and will not let it go. Then comes Elihu, and he has much to say that is wise, but he cannot settle the matter. At last comes God into the controversy, and what is the Lord's argument? Does he proceed to justify himself in what he has done with Job, to give Job reasons for covering him with boils and blains, and excuse himself for having taken a perfect and upright man and laid him prostrate on a dunghill? No, but instead thereof he

unveils a portion of his Godhead, and reveals his power in some such language as this: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof? Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" Thus the Lord displayed the greatness of his power, while Job sat cowering down, and cried out, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Ah, men and women, if ye did but know what God is, and who he is, if but some flashes of his divine omnipotence, or any other of his glorious attributes, were let loose upon you, you would perceive that he has the fullest claims upon your allegiance, and that you ought to live for his glory. Imagine that at this instant midnight darkness should settle over us, out of which should burst forth a thunder-clap making each stone in this building to tremble, while down every one of yonder columns lurid lightning should begin to stream; imagine that the earth beneath us rocked and reeled after the manner of the city of Lisbon, or Aleppo in years gone by; conceive that peal on peal again of that terrible thunder should be heard; why there is not one of us but would long to be the servant of that terrible God, and instinctively inquire what he would have us to do? Atheists, in times of tempest and storm, have found but little help in their philosophy; like Pharaoh, they have been ready to cry, "Entreat the Lord for me." But the reeling earth, or heaven on a blaze, what were these? The touch of his finger and glance of his eye would do far more. He touches the hills, and they smoke, but as for himself, who shall conceive of him? Let us adore his overwhelming majesty, and bow down before him, for the Lord he is God.

The second ground of the Lord's claim is *his creation of us*. "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves." We are every one of us the offspring of the divine power. This is a fact of which we are informed by revelation, but it is also one which every instinct of our nature agrees with. You never saw a child startled when it was told for the first time that God made it, for within that little mind there dwells an instinct which accepts the statement. The theory that we are not made, but are mere developments of materialism, wears upon its face all the marks of unsupported fiction. Certain statements are called axioms, because they are self-evident truths, but this is an axiom reversed, for it is a self-evident lie. To an unsophisticated mind its repetition is its refutation; indeed, whenever I hear people mention it they seem unable to suppress a laugh, and I do not wonder, for even nature itself forces them to despise what they pretend to believe. The atomic theory was originated, I have no doubt, either in Pandemonium or in Bedlam: it is worthy of either, but it is unworthy of any man who possesses either sanity or morality. No, we did not become what we are by chance or growth. God made us. This belief is the easiest escape from all difficulties, and besides, it is

true, and everything in us tells us so. Now, since the Lord made us, he has a right to us. The property which God has in man is proved beyond dispute by our being his creatures. The potter has a right to make the vessel for what use he pleases, still he has not such absolute right over his clay as God has over us, for the potter does not make the clay; he makes the vessel from the clay, but the clay is there from the first. The Lord has in our case made the clay from which he has fashioned us, and therefore we are entirely at his disposal, and should serve him with all our hearts. Why, man, if you make anything, you expect to use it. If you make a tool for your trade you reckon upon employing it according to your pleasure; and if it would never bend to your will, or be useful to your purpose, you would speedily put it away. So is it with you, the Lord who made you, has a right to your service and obedience. Will you not acknowledge his claim? Consider what he has made us. No mean things are we! Who but God could make a man? Raphael takes the pencil in his hand, and with master touch creates upon yonder canvas the most wondrous forms; and the sculptor with his chisel and his hammer develops amazing beauty; but there is no life, thought, intellect, and if you speak there is neither voice nor answering. How different are you from the canvas and the marble, for in your bosom there is a mysterious principle, which makes you akin to the Deity, for your soul can know reason, believe, understand, and love. I had almost called the soul infinite, for God has made it capable of such wondrous things. Thus has he trusted us with high powers and faculties, and lifted us up to a high position; surely, then, it is ours to serve him with a loving loyalty.

I like to think that the Lord hath made us, and to yield myself to him on that ground, because while the grandeur of what he has made us calls us to homage, even the lowly side has its claim too, and a sweet one. Our powers are finite, and sometimes we are troubled about that fact, wishing we could do more for our Lord: but we need not fear when we remember that he hath made us, and therefore fixed the measure of our capacity. In Roger de Wendover's "Flowers of History," an ancient Saxon chronicle, we read of a Saxon king, who, riding through a forest, came upon a little church in which a priest was saying prayers, and this priest was lame and hump-backed; and therefore the rough Saxon king was ready to despise him, till he heard him chaunt these words, "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves." The king blushed, and owned his fault. If, then, we are of small beauty or slender talent, let us not complain, but serve him who has made us what we are. If we are amazed at a truth which we cannot comprehend; if we find portions of God's word to be beyond our depth, let us not complain, but remember that the Lord could have made us understand all things if he had chosen, and as he has not done so, "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves." When any say to us, "Your religion is beyond you, the truths you believe you cannot comprehend," we answer, "We are quite satisfied it should be so, for the Lord hath made us, and not we ourselves." If he has made us capacious to a larger degree than our fellows, we will give him all the more honour; but if we be vessels of small

capacity we will not wish to be other than our Maker would have us to be.

Dear brethren, I cannot conceive any higher claim upon our service than this, that God has created us, except that the same truth may be sung an octave higher. Common men may sing, "It is he that made us, and not we ourselves"; even the brute creation might join in that confession: but, O ye saints, yours is a loftier note, for you have been twice made, born again, created anew in Christ Jesus, and after a nobler fashion ye can sing, "It is he that made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." Creation has its claims, but election and redemption rise still higher; from those peculiarly favoured the Lord must have peculiar praise.

A third reason for living unto the Lord lies in *his shepherding of us*. "We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." God has not left us and gone away. He has not left us as the ostrich leaves her eggs, to be broken by the passer's foot. He is watching over us at every hour; even as a shepherd guards his flock. Over us all he exercises an unceasing care, a watchful providence, and therefore we should return to him daily praise. It has been well said that some men represent God as having taken the universe like a watch, wound it up, and then put it under his pillow and gone to sleep: but it is not so. God's finger is on every wheel of the world's machinery; God's power is that which puts force into the laws of the universe, they were a mere dead letter if he were not powerfully active evermore. Child of Adam, in thy cradle thou art not rocked by wild winds, but by the hand of love. Daughter of affliction, thou art not laid prostrate on yon bed to be the victim of heartless laws, but there is One who makes all thy bed in thy sickness with his own kind and tender hand. God giveth us day by day our daily bread. God clotheth us; he gives breath for these heaving lungs, and blood for this beating heart; he keeps us in life, and if his power were withdrawn we should sink immediately into death. Now, therefore, because it is so, we are bound to give to our great Shepherd our daily service. Ye are the sheep of his hand; for you the hourly provision, for you the constant protection, for you the wise and judicious governance, for you the royal leadership through the desert to the pastures on the other side of Jordan, for you the power that chases away the wolf, for you the skill that finds out the pastures of the wilderness, for you those superior comforts which come from the redeeming angel's presence, and flow from the very fact that he is yours. Therefore, render to the Lord your homage and your praise. Men, because ye are men, adore the God who keeps you living men; but saintly men, men renewed and fed out of the storehouse of divine grace, serve your God, I pray you, with all your heart, and soul, and strength, because you especially are the sheep of his pasture and the people of his hand.

A fourth reason for adoration and service is given in the last verse of our text, it is *the divine character*: "For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations." Here are three master motives for serving the Lord our God. Oh that all would feel their weight. First, he is *good*. Now, if I were to lift up a standard in this assembly this morning and say, "This banner

presents the cause of everything that is just, right, true, kind, and benevolent, I should expect many a young heart to enlist beneath it; or when pretenders in all lands have talked of liberty and virtue, and brave spirits have been enchanted and rushed to death for the grand old cause. Now, God is good, just, right, true, kind, benevolent; in a word, God is love, and therefore who would not serve him? Who will refuse to be the servant of infinite perfection? Oh, were he not my God, but another man's God, methinks I would steal away to him to be enlisted beneath the banner of such a God as he is. To keep the laws of God must always be incumbent upon us, because those laws are the very essence of right; none of them are arbitrary, all of them are requirements of unsullied holiness and unswerving justice. Indeed, commands of God are something more than merely right; they are good in the sense of kind. When God says, "Thou shalt not," it is only like a mother forbidding her child to cut its fingers with an edged tool, or to eat poisonous berries. When God says, "Thou shalt," it is practically a direction to us to be happy, or at least to do that thing which in due course leads to happiness. The laws of the Lord our God are right in all respects, and therefore I claim from every one of us the obedience of your heart to God.

Then it is added, "His mercy is everlasting." Who would not serve one whose mercy endureth for ever? Observe, that he is always merciful. Never does a sinner come to him and find him devoid of pity. The Lord is merciful and gracious when we are children, he is equally so to us in middle life, and when we grow grey in years he is merciful still. We cannot wear out his patience nor exhaust his forgiving love. He has given us a Saviour who ever liveth to make intercession for transgressors. What a blessing is this. So long as we live we have an advocate to plead for us! He has set up a mercy-seat for us for all times, and to it we may go as often as we will. He did not erect a mercy-seat on earth for a hundred years and then withdraw it, but, blessed be his name, we always have the right of access, and we have still a plea to urge, for Jesu's blood has not lost its savour. There, too, is the Spirit of God always waiting to help us to pray, and whenever we wish to draw near to the mercy-seat he is ready to teach us what we should pray for as we ought, and even to utter for us groanings which we ourselves could not utter. Oh, who would not serve a God whose mercy is everlasting? Cruel is that heart which infinite gentleness does not persuade. If God be merciful, man should no more be rebellious.

It is added, "His *truth* endureth to all generations," that is to say you will not find in God one thing to-day and another thing to-morrow. What he promises he will perform. Every word of his stands fast for ever, like himself, immutable. Trust him to-day, and you will not find him fail you, neither to-morrow, nor all the days of your life. The God of Abraham is our God to-day, and has not changed through the revolutions of years. The Saviour whom we trusted in our boyhood, is still the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Blessed be his name. I think it was this attribute of God that had the greatest charm to my young heart, it seemed so sweet to rest my soul with an unchangeable God, so delightful to know, that if I did once enjoy

his love he would never take it away from me, that if he was once reconciled to me by the death of his Son, I should for ever be his child and be dear to his heart. This gave my heart gladness and I hold forth this truth now as a sweet inducement to those present who have not trusted to the Lord that they should do so, for the Lord is good and his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations. Thus I have set before you the grounds of God's claims; are they solid? Do you consent to them? Oh, that sovereign grace would constrain each of us to live alone for the glory of God. It is his most righteous due.

II. Now very briefly indeed, THE CLAIMS OF GOD—HOW HAVE WE REGARDED THEM? Answer for yourselves. Alas, some have paid no respect to these claims—in fact they have denied them, and have said in effect, “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?” Have I one such person here? I pray God to change his heart, for the great may much more wisely contend with the flame which has already burned its wings than you contend with your Maker? As surely as you live, God will vanquish you, and make you own his supremacy. If you will not obey him he will dash you in pieces like a potter's vessel.

A far larger number of persons, however, ignore rather than oppose God's claim. They have lived in this world now perhaps to middle age and never thought about God at all, though he has made them and kept them in being. That is the way that many a debtor has done with his debts. He has felt easy because he has not been dunned about them; but surely that is a doubtful honesty which rests in peace because the creditor does not happen to clamour. A truly honest man is dissatisfied till he has discharged his obligations, and every noble spirit will be discontented with itself because it has not paid its due to God. What if the Lord has used no severities, has sent no sheriff's officers, of sickness or bereavement, shall we not all the more heartily enquire, “What shall I render unto the Lord?” Shall we rob God because he is merciful? Shall we make his goodness a reason for neglecting him? Can it be right that we should never render to the Most High according to the benefits received?

There are multitudes who in theory acknowledge all the claims of God, but as a matter of fact they deny them, or they evade them by a merely outward religiousness. They will not be honest, but they will go to church; they will not cleanse themselves from iniquity, but they will be baptised; to live a holy life is a matter they care not for, but they will take the sacrament; believe in Jesus, and yield themselves up to the love of God, they will not, but they have not the slightest objection to joining in a procession or going upon pilgrimage—thus giving God brass counters instead of gold, outward appearances instead of real obedience. The love of the heart and trust of the Spirit man refuses to his Maker, and so long as he does so all his offerings are vain.

Sorrowfully must we all confess also that where we have tried to honour the Lord, and have done so in a measure by his grace, yet we have failed of perfection; we have to confess that oftentimes the pressure of the body which is near, and of the things that are seen and tangible, has been greater upon us than the force of the things which

cannot be seen, but are eternal. We have yielded to self too often, and have robbed the Lord. What shall we do in this case? Why, we have to bless our everlasting God and Father, that he has provided an atoning sacrifice for all our shortcomings, and that there is one, partaker of our nature who stands in the gap on our behalf, in whom we can be accepted, notwithstanding all our shortcomings and offences. Let us go to God in Christ Jesus. He bids us believe in Jesus, and assures us of pardon and salvation on the spot if we do so. The demands of God are met in the life and death of his only-begotten Son: faith lets us see that they were met for us, and that we are clear. Brethren, we have believed, yea, and we will believe, that Jesus died for us, and here comes our joy, that we are delivered from the wrath of God, notwithstanding that we have fallen short of his deserts. And now what follows? I feel concerning it just this, that now there are more bonds to bind me to the service of God than ever; he has forgiven me for his name's sake, and washed me in the blood of his own Son, and I am his by firmer bonds than ever. No obligations are so forcible as those which arise out of free grace and dying love. Pardoned sin is no argument for the indulgence of future sin, but an abundant argument for future holiness in every heart that feels its power. O ye saints of God, transgression being blotted out ye will no more transgress; made his elect, you elect to serve him; being his adopted children you rejoice to do your Father's will; and now henceforth and for ever you are the Lord's.

III. This brings me to the concluding note of our discourse, which is this—THE CLAIMS OF GOD, WHEN THEY ARE REGARDED, HOW DO THEY INFLUENCE MEN? Give me your hearts a few minutes. I am persuaded, brethren, that the noblest form of man that is to be found on the face of the earth is the man who serves God; that all other forms of manhood are faulty and imperfect in themselves, to a very high degree, and are also far inferior in force and beauty to that which is produced in men by consecration to the service of God. A man who is guided by the Holy Ghost to live for the Lord is a nobler being altogether than one moved by a less lofty aim.

Let me show you how healthy it is to serve God. The man who serves God, led by the Spirit of God so to do, is humble. Were he proud it were proof at once that he was not serving God; but the remembrance that God is his sovereign, and has made him, that in his hand is his breath, makes the good man feel that he is nothing but dust and ashes at his very best.

He cannot cry out with Nebuchadnezzar, "Behold this great Babylon which I have builded:" he is far more likely to crouch down where Nebuchadnezzar did after God had taught him better, and to say, "Now I extol and honour the King of heaven." Serving God keeps man in his right place. It is a poise to him, without which he might be drifted to destruction, like the myriads of butterflies which I have seen far out at sea, condemned ere long to sink into the wave. At the same time, while it sobers a man it fills him with joy, and praise, and gratitude, thus giving him sail as well as ballast. A man who loves to serve God receives mercies at his hand with great thankfulness and joy, and is content with the will of God, and therefore is full of grati-

tude to him; and let me tell you there are no sweeter moments in a man's life than those which are occupied with adoring gratitude.

Nothing is more purging, or cleanses a man more from earthly grossness, and from all the defilement of selfishness, than to serve the ever-living and ever-blessed God, and to feel that there is one so much greater, so much better than one's self, towards whom we aspire, for whom we live. Thus is a man at once humbled, cheered, and elevated.

The service of God is honourable as no other service is. There is a man who lives for himself; his great object is to get money. Look at him and consider him well! Is not the greed of wealth one of the most beggarly passions that can possess a human bosom? Yon ant, which labours for its commonwealth is to my mind up among the angels, compared with a man who sweats and toils and starves himself, merely for the sake of heaping up for himself a mass of yellow metal. Can I more highly commend the lover of pleasure? What is pleasure? As the world understands it, it is a hollow sham, a veneer of mirth, covering deep dissatisfaction. I often think when I hear worldlings laughing at such poor nonsense, that they pull each other's sleeves and say, "Laugh. You ought to laugh." I cannot see the mirth of their amusements, but they do. They struggle to seem happy, but what after all is it to have lived to be amused? To have spent all one's powers in killing time! Is anything more contemptible?

How horrible it is when man lives for lust, and puts forth all his strength to indulge his passions! Brutes! beasts! Alas! I slander the beasts when I compare them to such men. The man who lives for God is a far nobler being. Why, in the very act of self-renunciation and of dedication to God the man has been lifted up from earth, and from all that holds him down to its dust and mire, and he has risen so much nearer to the cherubim, so much nearer, in fact, to the divine. This makes a man a man, for a man who serves is courageous, and too manly to be a slave. "Nay," he says, "God bids me do such an act, and I will do it straight ahead; and though such and such a thing you bid me do, since God has not commanded me, your bidding is no law to me. My knee was made to bow before my God and not to you, and my mind to believe what God reveals and not what you choose to tell." He is the free man whom the love of God makes free. What wonderful proofs we have had of this throughout history, for the men who have served God have been the most intrepid of mortals. Behold the burning fiery furnace, and the tyrant's face almost as red as the furnace itself; he can hardly speak, he is choked with passion, because the three young men will not worship the brazen image: but look how cool they are as they say "The God whom we serve is able to deliver us, but if not, be it known unto thee that we will not bow down to the image which thou hast set up." Here the true style of manhood. The love of God makes heroes.

Give a man a resolve to serve God and he is endowed with wondrous perseverance. Look at the apostles, and martyrs, and missionaries of the faith, how they have pressed on, despite a world in arms; when a nation has been apparently inaccessible they have found an entrance; when the first missionary has died another has been ready to follow in

is footsteps. The first church, in her weakness, and poverty, and ignorance, struggled with philosophy and wealth, and all the power of heathen Rome, till at last the weak overcame the strong, and the foolish overthrew the wise. They that serve God cannot be conquered, from defeats they learn victory; if they have to wait they can wait, for they have linked themselves with the lifetime of the eternal, and God is in no hurry, nor are they. If to secure a hearing or truth takes a generation, let it take a generation; if it takes fifty generations, let it take them, but the deed shall be done, and the truth shall be preached, and the idols shall be abolished, and God shall be adored. O Lord, thy service makes us akin to thee. Blessed are they that wear thy yoke! How strong they grow, how patient to endure, how firm to stand fast, how swift to run. They mount with wings as eagles when they learn to serve thee.

The man who is led by the Holy Ghost to serve God is incited thereby to a zeal, a fervour, and a self-sacrifice to which nothing else could bring him. If you are familiar with the lives of the pioneers of the cross, and especially with the deaths of the martyrs, you will have seen what grace can make of men. Are not their deeds sublime? Why, these men laughed at impossibilities, and scorned difficulties. They counted the rack and the torture mere every day things, and learned to smile in the face of death itself, because they served God. They never thought of running away, nor dreamed of retracting their testimony. Men said, "You are fools:" they were prepared to hear them say that, and reckoned it a fulfilment of prophecy. The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together and said, "We will stamp you out." They were prepared for that also, but they were not stamped out. They saw insuperable difficulties in their way to the eye of sense, but they did not care what the eye of sense saw, they used the eye of faith, and believing that they were engaged in the service of God they knew that God would be with them; they felt that all the forces of nature on earth, and all the angels in heaven, and all the attributes of deity, were on the side of the man who is doing God's service, and therefore they went straight on. I have heard say that a mad man will often display the strength of ten men; and I know there is another side to that fact, for when a man becomes possessed with the divine Spirit, and is carried right away with it, there is no telling what force is in him, he will be ten men in one. Why, there are cases in which a nation of men seem to have been bound up into one single humanity, when the man has surrendered himself to the service of God. Look at Martin Luther! You cannot regard him as an ordinary man, you cannot help viewing him as a conglomeration of a whole tribe of men. He believes he has truth to proclaim, and in God's name he preaches it, and if there are as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the tops of the houses it is nothing to Luther; and if the Elector of Saxony tells him that he will no longer shelter him, what will he do? Why he declares that he will shelter himself beneath the broad shield of the eternal God. When the Pope issues a Bull against him he burns the document. What cared he? He would have burned Rome itself for that matter. The man had courage enough for anything. Or take John Knox, all emaciated, weak, and ready to die, and

yet so God-possessed, so inspired, that he is not preaching for a quarter-of-an-hour before you think he will dash the pulpit to shivers; he shakes the whole of Scotland, and is more dreaded by the Popish Queen than an army of ten thousand men, for God is in the man. Oh, get to feel "It is God's will, and at all hazards I am going to do it, for God bids me." Why, sir, you may as well try to stop the sun in its course as to stop a man who is mastered by that conviction. If ever this drivelling age of little men is to be lifted up into something like respectability, and, redeemed from the morass of falsehood in which it lies festering, we must breed a race of men who mean to serve God, come what may, and to make no reckoning but this: "Is this right? It shall be done. Is this wrong? Then it shall cease." There must be no compromise, no talk about marring our usefulness and spoiling our position by being too exact. Usefulness and position! let them be marred and spoiled if truth comes in the way, for God is to be followed into the jungle, ay, and down the wild beasts' throats, and into the jaws of hell, if he leads the way. God must be the guide, and if we follow God it shall be well with us. But if we do not, that which man thinks easiest is after all the hardest. He thinks it easiest to be as near right as you can, but to run no risks; he thinks it best to keep peace at home, to yield many points, and not be too puritanic and too precise, and so on. That is the easy way, and the way which God abhors, and the way which will end in a festering conscience at last, and in being shut out of heaven. But the way to serve God is to be washed in the blood of Jesus, and then to obey the Lord without reserve, and seek his honour only. This is the way to heaven, and when we reach those blissful seats we shall be all in tune with the perfected, for they serve the Lord day and night, and find it bliss to do so. This preparation and service on earth is absolutely essential to the enjoyment of heaven above. May God grant you then, by his Holy Spirit, to yield yourselves up to God, henceforth to serve him, and may we meet above. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalms xcvi. xcvi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—187, 66 (Song I.), 195.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE MASTER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

She called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for
"—John xi. 28.

I suppose by Martha's whispering the word "the Master" in Mary's ear that it was the common name by which the sisters spoke of our Lord to one another in his absence. Perhaps it was his usual name amongst all the disciples, for Jesus said, "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am." It often happens that for persons whom we love we have some special title by which we speak of them familiarly when we are in the circle of those who are in our esteem of them. Instead of always using their official names or their actual names, there is some one name which we have attached to them, which calls up happy associations, or reminds us of endearing traits in their character, and therefore it is very sweet to our mouths. So I suppose that most of the disciples called Jesus "the Master," many of them coupling with it the word "Lord." Mary, I would suppose, was peculiarly given to the use of the term, it was her name for the Lord. I fancy that she called him "*my* Master," for, of course, Martha could not say to her, "your Master is come," that would have been to cast suspicion on her own loyalty to Jesus, but perhaps she did not feel exactly in a frame of mind to say, "our Master," remembering that he was master of so many more besides, and half hoping that he might be Master over Death himself. She therefore said, "*The* Master." It was an emphatic title, "*The* Master is come." Very remarkable is it that minds of a kindred spirit to ours have always loved this title of "the Master," and more especially the wondrous, sweet, mystic poet and dear lover of his Lord, George Herbert, who, whenever he heard the name of Jesus mentioned, would always say "*my* Master." He has given us that quaint poem, called "The Odour," which begins,

"How sweetly doth *my* Master sound, *my* Master."

No. 1,198.

There must needs be something exceedingly precious about the title for a Mary and a Herbert thus to be enamoured of it above all others. Jesus has many names, all full of music; this must be choice indeed to be selected before them all as the title which his best beloved prefer to apply to him. There are many among us who are ourselves accustomed to speak of the Lord as the Master, and, though there are many other titles, such as "the Well-beloved," "the Good Shepherd," "the Friend," "the Bridegroom," "the Redeemer," and "the Saviour," yet we still cherish a very special affection for this one name, which gives forth to us "an oriental fragrantcy," with which "all day we do perfume our mind."

You are aware that the word might just as well be translated the "Teacher," the authoritative teacher, for that is the gist of its meaning. I am glad to pronounce it Master, because usage, and sweet association have enshrined the word, and also because we have still among us the custom of calling the Chief Teacher in a School or College *the Master*, but still, had our version given us "the Teacher is come" it would have been nearer the mark.

I. I shall speak a few words, first, upon THE DEEP PROPRIETY OF THIS TITLE AS APPLIED TO OUR LORD.

He is, indeed, the Master—the Teacher. What if I put the two together, and say the Master-Teacher? He has a peculiar fitness for this office. To be a master-teacher a man must have a *masterly mind*. Certainly all minds are not cast in the same mould, and are not possessed with the same vigour, depth, force, and quickness of action. Some mental organizations are princely by their very formation; though they may belong to ploughboys, the imperial stamp is on them. These minds cannot be smothered by a peasant's smock-frock, nor kept down by the load of poverty; master minds are recognised by an innate superiority, and force their way to the front. I say nothing of the moral qualities of Napoleon, but a mind so vast as his could not have been for ever hidden away among the soldiers in the ranks; he must become a captain and a conqueror. So, too, a Cromwell or a Washington must rise to be *masters* among men, because the calibre of their minds was masterly. Such men see a thing quickly; they hold it with a comprehensive grasp; and they have a way of infusing faith into others about it which, ere long, pushes them into a master's position, with the common consent of all around them. You cannot have for a master-teacher a man with a little soul. He may insinuate himself into the chair of the teacher, but every one will see that he is out of place; and no one will delight to think of him as his master. Many painters there are, but there have been few Raphaels, or Michael Angelos, few who could found schools to perpetuate their names. Many songsters have there been, but few poets have founded schools of tuneful thought in which they have been the beloved choirmasters. Many philosophers have there been, but a Socrates or an Aristotle will not be found every day; for great teachers must have great minds, and these are rare among men. The teacher of all teachers, the master of all the teachers must needs be a grand, colossal spirit, head and shoulders above other men. Such a soul Mary saw in her Lord Jesus Christ, and such we see there also, and we therefore challenge for our Lord the name of

"the Master." There we have divinity itself, with its omniscience and infallibility, and at the same time a complete, full-orbed manhood, harmonious in all its qualities, a perfect equilibrium of excellence, in which there is no excess and no deficiency. You find in him a perfect mind, and that mind so human, as to be intensely manly, and sweetly womanly also. In Jesus there was all the tenderness and sympathy of woman, joined with the strength and courage of man. His love was feminine, but not effeminate; his heart was masculine, but not hard and stern. He was *the* complete man, unfallen manhood in its perfectness.

Our Lord was a man who impressed all who came near him, they either hated him intensely, or loved him fervently. Wherever he was, he was seen to be a prince among the sons of men. The devil recognised him, and tempted him beyond all others. He saw in him a foeman worthy of his steel, and took him into the wilderness to have a duel with him, hoping to defeat the race by vanquishing its manifest chief. Even scribes and Pharisees, who despised every one who made not broad the borders of his garment, could not despise this man; they could hate him, but their hate was the unconscious reverence which evil is forced to render to superlative goodness and greatness. Jesus could not be ignored and overlooked, he was a force in every place, a power wherever he might be. He is a master, yea, "the Master." There is a grandeur about his whole human nature, so that he stands out above all other men, like some mighty Alpine peak, which overtops the minor hills, and casts its shadow all adown the vales.

But to make a master teacher a man must not only have a master mind, but he must have a *master knowledge* of that which he has to teach; and it is best if that be acquired by experience rather than by instruction. Such was the case with our Lord Jesus. He came to teach us the science of life, and in him was life; he experienced life in all its phases, and was tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin. The highest were not above him, the lowest he did not regard as beneath him, but he condescended to their infirmities and sorrows. There are no dreary glens of melancholy which his feet have not trodden, nor lofty peaks of joy which he has not scaled; wondrous was the joy as well as the sorrow of our Lord Jesus Christ. He leads his people through the wilderness, and, like Hobab of old, he knows where they should encamp in the wilderness, and understands all the way which they must traverse to reach the promised land. He was made "perfect through suffering." He teaches us no truth as mere theory, but as matter of actual experiment on his own person. The remedy he gives to us he has tested. If there be bitterness for us, he has quaffed full bowls of it, and if there be sweetness in his cup he gives us of his joy; all things that have to do with this life and godliness, the whole science of salvation from the gates of hell up to the throne of God, he understands right well, by personal acquaintance therewith. There is not a single chapter of the book of revelation which he does not comprehend, nor a solitary page of the book of experience which he does not understand; and therefore he is fit to teach, having both a master mind and a master knowledge of that which he comes to inculcate.

Moreover, our great Master while here below had a *masterly way of teaching*, and this also is essential, for it is not every man of vast knowledge and great mind that can teach others. Aptness to teach is required. We know some whose utterances never seem to be in the tongue of ordinary men. If they have anything to say they say it in a jargon of their own, which they probably comprehend, and a few of their disciples, but it is Greek to commonplace people. Blessed is that teacher who teaches what he understands himself in a way which enables others to understand him. I like the style of old Cobbett when he said, "I not only speak so that men can understand me, but so that they *cannot misunderstand* me;" and such a teacher was Christ to his own disciples. When they sat at his feet he made truth so clear that wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein. By homely parables and phrases which caught the ear, and won the heart, he brought down celestial truths to ordinary comprehensions, when the Spirit of God had once cleansed those comprehensions, and made them able to receive the truth. He taught, moreover, not only plainly, but lovingly. So gently did he open up things to his own disciples that it must have been a pleasure to be ignorant, in order to require to be taught, and a greater pleasure still to learn—to learn in such a way. The way in which he taught was as sweet as the truth he taught. Everybody that came into Christ's school felt at home, felt pleased with their Master, and confident that if they could learn anywhere they must learn at his feet.

The Master gave, in connection with his teaching, a measure of the Holy Spirit—not the full measure, for that was reserved until he had ascended up on high, and the Spirit should baptise the church; but he gave to each of his people a measure of the Spirit of God, by which truths were not taught to their ears only but to their hearts also. Ah, my brethren, we are not such teachers as Christ; for, when we have done our best, we can only reach the ear. We cannot give the Holy Spirit, but he can; and when the Spirit this day comes from Christ, and takes of his things and reveals them unto us, then we see yet more of our Lord's masterly modes of teaching, and learn what a Master Jesus is, who writes his lessons, not on the black board, but on the fleshy tablets of the heart; who gives us school-books, nay, is himself the book; who sets us lessons, yea, is himself the lesson; who performs before us that which he would have us do, so that when we know him we know what he has to teach, and when we imitate him we have followed the precepts which he gives. Our Lord's way of embodying his instruction in himself is a right royal one, and none can rival him in it. Do not children learn infinitely more by example than ever they do by precept? And this is how our Master teaches us. "Never man spake like this man" is a grand Christian proverb; but it might be eclipsed by another: "Never man *acted* like this man"; for this man's deeds and words tally with each other, the deeds embody and enforce the words, give them life, and help us to understand them. He is a prophet like unto Moses, because he is mighty both in word and in deed, and so he is of prophets and teachers *the Master*.

Here is a master mind, a master experience, and a master mode of teaching: well is he called "the Master."

Withal, dear friends, there was, over and above this—if I have not comprehended it in what I have already said—a *master influence* which Jesus, as a teacher, had over those who came within his range. They did not merely see, but feel; they did not only know, but love; they did not merely prize the lesson, but they worshipped the teacher. What a master was this Christ, whose very self became the power by which sin was checked, and ultimately cast out, and by which virtue was implanted, and the new life commenced, nourished, and brought to perfection. To have one to teach you who is very dear to you is to make lessons easy. No child learns better than from a mother qualified to teach, who knows how to make her lessons sweet, by crystallising them in the sugar of her own affection. Then it is pleasure, as well as duty, to learn. But no mother ever won her child's heart (and there have been tender and affectionate mothers, too) so thoroughly as Jesus won the heart of Mary; or, I may say, as Jesus has won your heart and mine, if you feel as my heart feels to my Lord. From him we want no reasonings to prove what he says, he is himself instead of reason and of argument. His love is the logic which proves everything to us. With him we hold no debate, what he has done for us has answered every question we could raise. If he tells us what we do not understand, we believe it. We ask if we may understand it, and if he tells us "No," we stay where we are, and believe the mystery. We love him so that we are as glad not to know as to know, if such should be his will; we believe his silence to be as eloquent as his speech, and that which he conceals to be as kindly intended as that which he reveals. Because we love him he exercises such an influence over us that, straightway, we prize his teaching and receive it; and the more we know him, and the more his inexpressibly delightful influence dominates our nature, the more completely we yield up imagination, thought, reason, everything, to him. Men may call us fools for it, but we have learned at Jesus' feet that "the world by wisdom knew not God," and that except we be converted, and become as little children, we shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven, and therefore we are not confounded when the world thinks us childish and credulous. The world is growing more manly and more foolish, and we are growing more childlike and more wise. We reckon that to grow downward into our Lord Jesus is the surest and truest growth; and when we shall have grown clean down to nothing, and lower still, till we are less than nothing, then we shall be full grown in the school of Jesus, and shall take a high degree in true learning, knowing the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

We may well call him Master who has a masterly mind, a masterly experience, and a masterly way of teaching; and, moreover, wields a masterly influence over his pupils, so that they are for ever bound heart and soul to him, and count him to be himself his own highest lesson, as well as the chief of all instructors.

Having proved that our beloved Lord is fairly entitled to the name, let me add that *he is by office the sole and alone Master of the church.*

There is in the Christian church no authority for a doctrine but

Christ's word. The inspired book which he has left us, charging us never to diminish a letter or add a syllable, that is our code imperial, our authorised creed, our settled standard of belief. I hear a great deal said of sundry "Bodies of divinity," but my own impression is that there never was but one body of divinity, and there never will be but one, and that is Jesus Christ in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." To the true church her body of divinity is Christ. Some churches refer to other standards, but we know no standard of theology but our Master. "I, if I be lifted up," saith he, "will draw all men unto me;" we feel no drawings towards any other master. He is the standard,—“Unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” We are not of those who will go no further than Martin Luther. Blessed be God for Martin Luther! God forbid that we should say a word in depreciation of him. But were we baptised unto Martin Luther? I trow not. Some can never budge an inch beyond John Calvin, whom I reverence first of all merely mortal men; but still John Calvin is not our master, but only a more advanced pupil in the school of Christ. He teaches, and, as far as he teaches as Christ taught, he is authoritative, but where Calvin goes apart from Jesus he is no more to be followed than Voltaire himself. There be brethren whose one reference for everything is to the utterances of John Wesley. "What would Mr. Wesley have said?" is a weighty question with them. We think it a small matter what he would have said, or what he did say for the guidance of Christians, now so many years after his departure; far better is it to enquire what Jesus says in his word. One of the grandest of men that ever lived was Wesley, but he is no master of ours. We were not baptised in the name of John Wesley, or John Calvin, or Martin Luther. "One is our Master, even Christ." And now the parliament of our country is about to set apart a learned judge to decide what is right in a so-called church of Christ, and he is to say, "This garment you may wear, and that you shall not; hitherto your ritual shall go but no further." In his person the House of Commons is to be recognised as the creator and lord and master of the Church of England, to whom he will say, "Do this," and she will do it, or "Refrain," and she will stay her hand. She must crouch and bend, and take her meat like any dog from the hand that patronises her, and her collar, made of what brass or leather Cæsar chooseth to ordain, shall bear this motto, "His servants ye are whom ye obey." Why, the poorest minister in the most despised of our churches, whose poverty is thought to make him contemptible, but whose poverty is his glory if he bears it for Christ's sake, would scorn to have any spiritual act of his church submitted to the judgment of the state, and would sooner die than be dictated to in the matter of divine worship. What has the church to do with the state? Our Master and Lord has set up a kingdom which owns no other King but himself; and we cannot bow, and will not bow, before decrees of Parliament and lords and kings in spiritual things. Christ's church has but one head, and that is Christ, and the doctrines which the church has to teach cannot be tested by a Court of Arches, or a bench of bishops, or a synod of ministers, or a presbytery, or a conference. The Lord Jesus Christ has taught us this and that: if his teaching be contradicted, the contradiction is

against his crown. Though the whole church were assembled, the church the true one, if it should contradict the teaching of its decrees ought to be no more to a Christian than the g of the wind upon the mountain wilds, for Christ is Master, ie but Christ. Though an apostle or an angel from heaven ny other doctrine than that of our Lord, let him be accursed. God that all Christians stood up for this. Then would

"Sects and names and parties fall,
And Jesus Christ be all in all."

ie sole teacher and the sole legislator. A church has a right to Christ's laws, but she has no right to make a law. The s of Christ are bound to carry out the rules of Christ, and ey so do, what is bound on earth is bound in heaven; but if re acted upon any rules but those of this book their laws are rthy of contempt; be they what they may, they bind no n heart. The yoke Christ puts on us it shall be our joy to wear, yoke which prelates would thrust upon us it shall be our glory le on. "If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed." fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you d be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

Master. That is the name Christ should receive throughout le church, and he should be regarded always, and on all occa- id in reference to all spiritual subjects, as the last Court of whose inspired word is

"The judge that ends the strife
Where wit and reason fail."

much upon the propriety of the title.

ut now, secondly, let us consider THE PECULIAR RECOGNITION MARY GAVE TO CHRIST AS THE MASTER.

did she give that recognition? *She became his pupil*: she sat verently at his feet. Beloved, if he be our Master, let us do the Let us take every word of Jesus, weigh it, read it, mark it, feed on it and inwardly digest it. I am afraid we do not read les as we should, or attach such importance as we ought to ade of expression which our Master uses. I should like to ture of Mary sitting at the Master's feet. Great artists have the Virgin Mary so often that they might take a change, and his Mary looking up with a deep, fixed gaze, drinking all in, suring all up; sometimes startled by a new thought and a ctrine, and then enquiringly waiting till her face beams with ble delight as new light floods her heart. Her attentive hip proved how truly Jesus was her Master.

mark, she was not only his disciple, but *she was a disciple of /se*. I do not know whether Gamaliel was in fashion then, lid not sit at his feet. I dare say there was some Rabbi Ben r other famous doctor of the period, but Mary never spent an h him, for every moment she could set apart was joyously the feet of a far dearer Rabbi. I wonder whether she was a f, and so sat close to the teacher for fear of losing a word!

Perhaps she feared she might be slow of heart, and so she got as near the preacher as others do who have a little deafness in their ears ; any how her favourite place was close at his feet. That shows us, since we are always dull of hearing in our souls, that it is good to get very close to Jesus when we are hearing him, and commune while we listen. She did not change from him to some one else for variety's sake. No, the Master, her Master, her only Master, was the Nazarene, whom others despised, but whom she called her Lord.

She was a willing scholar, for "Mary hath chosen the good part," said Jesus. Nobody sent her to sit at Jesu's feet. Jesus drew her, and she could not help coming, but she loved to be there. She was a willing and delighted listener. Never was she so happy as when she had her choice, that choice being always to learn of him. Children at school always learn well if they want to learn. If they are driven to school they learn but little comparatively, but when they want to go, and when they love the teacher, it is quick learning with them ; and happy is the teacher who has a class that has chosen him to teach them. Mary could well call him "the Master," for she rendered him her sole attention, her loving and delighted attention. And, mark you, in choosing Christ for Master, *she perseveringly stuck to him*. Her choice was not taken away from her, and she did not give it up. Martha looked very cross one day. How was she to see to the roast meat and the boiled at once ? How could she be expected to prepare the table, and to look to the fire in the kitchen too ? Why could not Mary come ? And she scowled, I do not doubt. But it did not signify. Mary sat there still. Perhaps she did not even notice Martha's face ; I think she did not, for the saints do not notice other countenances when Christ's beauty is to be seen : there is something so absorbing about him ; he takes you all into himself, and bears you right away, drawing not only all men, but all *of* men to himself, when he does draw ; and so she sat there still, and listened on. Those children will learn who stick to their books, who come not sometimes to study, but are always learning. So Mary recognised the Lord Jesus Christ's master-teachership by giving to him that persevering attention which such a Master-teacher had a right to claim.

She went humbly to him ; for while she sat at his feet for nearness, she sat there, too, out of deep humiliation of spirit. She felt it her highest honour to be sitting in the lowest place, for lowly was her mind. They shall learn most of Christ who think least of themselves. When a place at his feet seems to be too good for us, or at any rate we are more than content with it, then will his speech distil as the rain and drop as the dew, and we shall be as the tender herbs that drink in sweet refreshment, and our souls shall grow.

Blessed wert thou, O Mary ! And blessed is each one of you, if you can call Christ your Master and prove it as she did. You shall have the good part which shall not be taken away from you.

III. Now I come to my third point, which is this—THE SPECIAL SWEETNESS OF THE NAME TO US. I have shown why it was peculiarly recognised by Mary, and now I would show that it has a peculiar sweetness for us also. "*The Master*" or "*My Master*," or "*My Teacher*."

I love that name in my own soul, because it is *as a teacher* that

Jesus Christ is my Saviour. The best illustration I can give you is that of one of those poor little boys in the street, an "Arab," without father and mother, or with parents worse than none; the poor child is covered with filth and rags, he is well known to the policemen, and has seen the inside of many a gaol; but a teacher of a ragged school has laid hold of him, and instructs him, and he is now washed and clothed, and happy. Now, that poor boy does not know the sweetness of "my father" or "my mother"; he does not recognise anything in those titles. Perhaps he never knew them, or only knew such a form of them as to disgust him. But with what a zest does he say, "My teacher!" These little children say, "My teacher" with quite as much affection as others speak of their mother. Where there has been a great moral change wrought by the influence of a teacher, the name "my teacher" has great sweetness in it. Now hear ye the story of the ragged boy and his teacher! I was that ragged child. Truly, I did not think myself ragged, for I was foolish enough to think my rags were fine garments, and that my filth was my beauty. I knew not what I was. My teacher saw me, he knew how foul I was and how ragged I was, and he taught me to see myself, and also to believe that he could wash me whiter than the snow. Yea, he went further and actually washed me till I was clean before the Lord. My teacher showed me a wardrobe of snow-white linen garments, and clothed me in them. My teacher has taught me a thousand things, and wrought innumerable good works upon me; I owe my salvation wholly to my teacher, my master, my Lord. Cannot you say the same? I know you can if you are indeed disciples of Jesus. "My teacher" means to you "my Saviour," for he saved you by teaching you your disease and your remedy, teaching you how wrong you were, and making you right by his teaching. The word master or teacher has to us a delightful meaning, for it is by his teaching that we are saved.

Let me tell you how as a preacher I love that name "my Master." I like to feel that what I said to those people on Sunday was not mine. I preached my Master, and I preached what my Master told me. Some find fault with the doctrine; I do not mind that, because it was none of mine, it was my Master's. If I were a servant, and went to the front door with a message, and the gentleman to whom I took it did not like the message, I should say, "Do not be vexed with me, sir. I have told you my master's message to the best of my ability, and I am not responsible for it. It is my master's word, not mine." When there are no souls converted it is dreary work, and one's heart is heavy, but it is sweet to go and tell your Master; and when souls are converted, and your heart is glad, it is a happy and a healthy thing to give all the glory to your Master. It must be an awkward thing to be an ambassador from the English court in some far-off land where there is no telegraph, and where the ambassador has to act on his own responsibility. He must feel it a serious burden. But, blessed be God, between every true minister and his Master there is a telegraphic communication; he need never do anything on his own account. He may imitate the disciples of John, who, when they had taken up the Baptist's mangled body, went and told Jesus. That is the thing to

do. There are difficulties in all churches, troubles in all families, and cares in all businesses, but it is good to have a Master to whom you can go as a servant, feeling, "He has the responsibility of the whole concern—not I; I have only to do what he bids me." If we once step beyond our Lord's commands the responsibility rests on us, and our trouble begins, but if we follow our Lord we cannot go astray.

And is not this a sweet name to quote when you are troubled, dear friends? Perhaps some of you are in trouble now. How it removes fear when you find out that he who sent the trouble is the Teacher who teaches you by the trouble—the Master who has a right to use what form of teaching he likes. In our schools much is learned from the black board, and in Christ's school much is learned from affliction. You have heard the story often, but I venture to repeat it again, of the gardener who had preserved with great care a very choice rose; and one morning when he went into the garden it was gone, and he scolded his fellow servants, and felt very grieved, till some one said, "I saw the master coming through the garden this morning, and I believe he took the rose." "Oh, then," said he, "if the master took it, I am content." Have you lost a dear child, or a wife, or a friend? It was HE that took your flower. It belonged to him. Would you wish to keep what Jesus wants? We are asked to pray sometimes for the lives of good people, and I think we may, but I have not always exercised faith while pleading, because it seemed to me that Christ pulled one way and I pulled the other. I said, "Father, let them be here," and Jesus said, "Father, I will that they be with me where I am;" and one could not pull very hard then. Only feel that Christ is drawing the other way, and you give up directly. You say, "Let the Master have it. The servant cannot oppose the Master." It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good. I was dumb with silence; I opened not my mouth because thou didst it. Our Master learned that lesson himself which he teaches to us. That is a very striking expression, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." It pleased God to pass by the wise and prudent, and therefore it pleased Christ that it should be so. It is well to have our hearts like that poor shepherd to whom a gentleman said, "I wish you a good day." Said he, "I never knew a bad day." "How is that, my friend?" "The days are such as God chooses to make them, and therefore they are all good." "Well," said the other, "but some days please you more than others?" "No," said he, "what pleases God pleases me." "Well, but have you not a choice?" said the other. "Yes, I have a choice, and that is, I choose that God should choose for me." "But have you not a choice whether you would live or die?" "No," said he, "for if I am here Christ will be with me, and if I am in heaven I shall be with him." "But suppose you had to choose?" "I would ask God to choose for me," said he. Oh, sweet simplicity which leaves everything with God; this is calling Jesus, Master, to perfection:

"Pleased with all the Lord provides,
Weaned from all the world besides."

Once again, dear friends, is it not sweet to us to call Jesus Master, because in so doing we take a position easy to reach, and yet most delightful. To call him bridegroom—what an honour is it to be so near akin to the Son of God! Friend is a familiar and honourable title; to call him Master, however, is often easier, and it is quite as sweet, for his service, if we take no higher place, is pure delight to us. If our hearts are right, to do the Lord's bidding is as much as we can ask for. Though we are sons now and not slaves, and therefore our service is of a different character from what it ever was before, yet service is delight. What will heaven be but perpetual service? Here we labour to enter into rest; there they enter into rest while they labour. Their rest is the perfect obedience of their fully sanctified spirits. Are you not panting for it? Will it not be one of your greatest joys in heaven to feel that you are his servants? The glorified ones are called his servants in heaven. "His servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads." Rid us of sin, and we should be in heaven now; earth would be heaven to us.

I want you, dear brethren in Christ, to go away rolling this sweet word under your tongue—"My Master," "My Master." You will never hear better music than that—"My Master," "My Master." Go and live as servants should live. Mind you make him truly your Master, for he says, "If I be a Master where is my honour?" Speak well of him, for servants should speak well of a good Master, and no servant ever had so dear a Master as he is.

But there are some of you who cannot say this. I wish you could. Jesus is not your Master. Who is, then? You have a master somewhere, for "his servants you are whom ye obey." Now, if you obey the lusts of the flesh, your master is your flesh, and the wages will be corruption; for that is what flesh comes to, corruption, and nothing better. Or your master is the devil, and his wages must be death. Run away from such a master. Mostly when servants leave their masters they are bound to give notice, but here is a case in which no notice should ever be given. When the prodigal son ran away from feeding the swine he never stopped to give notice that he was going to leave the pigs, but started off directly, and I recommend every sinner to run by the grace of God straight away from his sins. Stopping to give notice is the ruin of many. They mean to be sober, but they must treat their good resolution to another glass or two; they intend to think about divine things, but they must go to the theatre once more; they would fain serve Christ, but to-morrow, not to-night. If I had such a master as you have—you who live in sin—I would up and away at once, by the grace of God, and say, "I will have Christ for my Lord." Look at your black master. Look at his cunning eyes! Can you not see that he is a flatterer? He means your ruin. He will destroy you as he has destroyed myriads already. That horrid leer of sin, that painted face, consider them and abhor them. Serve not a master who, though he gives you fair promises, labours for your destruction? Up and away, ye slaves of sin! Eternal Spirit, come and break their chains! Sweet star of liberty, guide them to the free country, and let them find in Jesus Christ their liberty!

My Master rejoices to receive runaways. His door is open to vagrants and vagabonds, to the scum of the earth, and the off-scouring of all things, to men that are dissatisfied with themselves, to wretches who have no joy of their lives, and are ready to lie down and die. "This man receiveth sinners." He is like David, who went into Adullam, and every man that was in debt and discontented came to him, and he became a captain over them. As Romulus and Remus gathered the first population of new Rome by harbouring escaped slaves and robbers, whom they trained into citizens and made to be brave soldiers, so my Master has laid the foundation of the new Jerusalem, and he looks for his citizens—ay, the noblest of them, over yonder there, where sin and Satan hold them captive; and he bids us sound out the silver trumpet, and tell the slaves of sin that if they flee to him he will never give them up to their old master, but he will emancipate them, make them citizens of his great city, sharers of his bounties, partakers in his triumphs; and they shall be his in the day when he makes up his jewels. I recollect preaching in this strain once, and an old sea captain told me after the sermon that he had served under the black flag for fifty years, and by the grace of God he would tear the old rag down, and run up the blood red cross at the mast-head. I recommended him not merely to change his flag, but to see that the vessel was repaired, but he wisely replied that repairing would be of no use to such an old water-logged hulk, and he had better scuttle the old ship, and have a new one. I reckon that is the best thing to do, to be dead indeed unto sin, and made alive in Christ Jesus; for you may do what you will with the old wreck of fallen nature, you will never keep it afloat. The old man must be crucified with Christ, it must be dead, and buried, and sunk fifty thousand fathoms deep, never to be heard of again. In the new vessel which Jesus launches in the day of our regeneration, with the blessed flag of atoning blood above us, we will sail to heaven convoyed by irresistible grace, giving God the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xi.

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THE AGONY IN GETHSEMANE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 18TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."—Luke xxii. 44.

OUR Lord, after having eaten the passover and celebrated the supper with his disciples, went with them to the Mount of Olives, and entered the garden of Gethsemane. What induced him to select that place to be the scene of his terrible agony? Why there in preference to anywhere else would he be arrested by his enemies? May we not conceive that as in a garden Adam's self-indulgence ruined us, so in another garden the agonies of the second Adam should restore us. Gethsemane supplies the medicine for the ills which followed upon the forbidden fruit of Eden. No flowers which bloomed upon the banks of the four-fold river were ever so precious to our race as the bitter herbs which grew hard by the black and sullen stream of Kedron.

May not our Lord also have thought of David, when on that memorable occasion he fled out of the city from his rebellious son, and it is written, "The king also himself passed over the brook Kedron," and he and his people went up bare-footed and bare-headed, weeping as they went? Behold, the greater David leaves the temple to become desolate, and forsakes the city which had rejected his admonitions, and with a sorrowful heart crosses the foul brook, to find in solitude a solace for his woes. Our Lord Jesus, moreover, meant us to see that our sin changed everything about him into sorrow, it turned his riches into poverty, his peace into travail, his glory into shame, and so the place of his peaceful retirement, where in hallowed devotion he had been nearest heaven in communion with God, our sin transformed into the focus of his sorrow, the centre of his woe. Where he had enjoyed most, there he must be called to suffer most. Our Lord may also have chosen the garden, because needing every remembrance that could sustain him in the conflict, he felt refreshed by the memory of former hours which there had passed away so quietly. He had there prayed,

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and gained strength and comfort. Those gnarled and twisted olives knew him well; there was scarce a blade of grass in the garden which he had not knelt upon; he had consecrated the spot to fellowship with God. What wonder then that he preferred this favoured soil? Just as a man would choose in sickness to lie in his own bed, so Jesus chose to endure his agony in his own oratory, where the recollections of former communings with his Father would come vividly before him.

But, probably, the chief reason for his resort to Gethsemane was, that it was his well-known haunt, and John tells us, "Judas also knew the place." Our Lord did not wish to conceal himself, he did not need to be hunted down like a thief, or searched out by spies. He went boldly to the place where his enemies knew that he was accustomed to pray, for he was willing to be taken to suffering and to death. They did not drag him off to Pilate's hall against his will, but he went with them voluntarily. When the hour was come for him to be betrayed there was he in a place where the traitor could readily find him, and when Judas would betray him with a kiss his cheek was ready to receive the traitorous salutation. The blessed Saviour delighted to do the will of the Lord, though it involved obedience unto death.

We have thus come to the gate of the garden of Gethsemane, let us now enter; but first let us put off our shoe from our foot, as Moses did, when he also saw the bush which burned with fire, and was not consumed. Surely we may say with Jacob, "How dreadful is this place!" I tremble at the task which lies before me, for how shall my feeble speech describe those agonies, for which strong crying and tears were scarcely an adequate expression? I desire with you to survey the sufferings of our Redeemer, but oh, may the Spirit of God prevent our mind from thinking aught amiss, or our tongue from speaking even one word which would be derogatory to him either in his immaculate manhood or his glorious Godhead. It is not easy when you are speaking of one who is both God and man to observe the exact line of correct speech; it is so easy to describe the divine side in such a manner as to trench upon the human, or to depict the human at the cost of the divine. Make me not an offender for a word if I should err. A man had need himself to be inspired, or to confine himself to the very words of inspiration, fitly to speak at all times upon the great "mystery of godliness," God manifest in the flesh, and especially when he has to dwell most upon God so manifest in suffering flesh that the weakest traits in manhood become the most conspicuous. O Lord, open thou my lips that my tongue may utter right words.

Meditating upon the agonizing scene in Gethsemane we are compelled to observe that our Saviour there endured a grief unknown to any previous period of his life, and therefore we will commence our discourse by raising the question, WHAT WAS THE CAUSE OF THE PECULIAR GRIEF OF GETHSEMANE? Our Lord was the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" throughout his whole life, and yet, though it may sound paradoxical, I scarcely think there existed on the face of the earth a happier man than Jesus of Nazareth, for the griefs which he endured were counterbalanced by the peace of purity, the calm of fellowship with God, and the joy of benevolence. This last every good man knows to be very sweet, and all the sweeter in proportion to the pain

which is voluntarily endured for the carrying out of its kind designs. It is always joy to do good, cost what it may. Moreover Jesus dwelt at perfect peace with God at all times; we know that he did so, for he regarded that peace as a choice legacy which he could bequeath to his disciples, and ere he died he said to them, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." He was meek and lowly of heart, and therefore his soul had rest; he was one of the meek who inherit the earth; one of the peacemakers who are and must be blessed. I think I mistake not when I say that our Lord was far from being an unhappy man. But in Gethsemane all seems changed, his peace is gone, his calm is turned to tempest. After supper our Lord had sung a hymn, but there was no singing in Gethsemane. Adown the steep bank which led from Jerusalem to the Kedron he talked very cheerfully, saying, "I am the vine and ye are the branches," and that wondrous prayer which he prayed with his disciples after that discourse, is very full of majesty: "Father, I will that they also whom thou has given me be with me where I am," is a very different prayer from that inside Gethsemane's walls, where he cries, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Notice that all his life long you scarcely find him uttering an expression of grief, and yet here he says, not only by his sighs and by his bloody sweat, but in so many words, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." In the garden the sufferer could not conceal his grief, and does not appear to have wished to do so. Backward and forward thrice he ran to his disciples, he let them see his sorrow and appealed to them for sympathy; his exclamations were very piteous, and his sighs and groans were, I doubt not, very terrible to hear. Chiefly did that sorrow reveal itself in bloody sweat, which is a very unusual phenomenon, although I suppose we must believe those writers who record instances somewhat similar. The old physician Galen gives an instance in which, through extremity of horror, an individual poured forth a discoloured sweat, so nearly crimson as at any rate to appear to have been blood. Other cases are given by medical authorities. We do not, however, on any previous occasion observe anything like this in our Lord's life; it was only in the last grim struggle among the olive trees that our champion resisted unto blood, agonizing against sin. What ailed Thee, O Lord, that thou shouldst be so sorely troubled just then?

We are clear that his deep sorrow and distress were not occasioned by any bodily pain. Our Saviour had doubtless been familiar with weakness and pain, for he took our sicknesses, but he never in any previous instance complained of physical suffering. Neither at the time when he entered Gethsemane had he been grieved by any bereavement. We know why it is written "Jesus wept," it was because his friend Lazarus was dead; but here there was no funeral, nor sick bed, nor particular cause of grief in that direction. Nor was it the revived remembrance of any past reproaches which had lain dormant in his mind. Long before this "reproach had broken his heart," and he had known to the full the vexations of contumely and scorn. They had called him a "drunken man and a wine bibber," they had charged him with casting out devils by the prince of the devils; they could not say more and yet he had bravely faced it all, it could not be possible that he was now

sorrowful unto death for such a cause. There must have been a something sharper than pain, more cutting than reproach, more terrible than bereavement, which now at this time grappled with the Saviour, and made him "exceeding sorrowful, and very heavy."

Do you suppose it was the fear of coming scorn, or the dread of crucifixion? Was it terror at the thought of death? Is not such a supposition impossible? Every man dreads death, and as man Jesus could not but shrink from it. When we were originally made we were created for immortality, and therefore to die is strange and uncongenial work to us, and the instincts of self-preservation cause us to start back from it; but surely in our Lord's case that natural cause could not have produced such specially painful results. It does not make even such poor cowards as we are sweat great drops of blood, why then should it work such terror in him? It is dishonouring to our Lord to imagine him less brave than his own disciples, yet we have seen some of the very feeblest of his saints triumphant in the prospect of departing. Read the stories of the martyrs, and you will frequently find them exultant in the near approach of the most cruel sufferings. The joy of the Lord has given such strength to them, that no coward thought has alarmed them for a single moment, but they have gone to the stake, or to the block, with psalms of victory upon their lips. Our Master must not be thought of as inferior to his boldest servants, it cannot be that he should tremble where they were brave. Oh, no; the noblest spirit among yon martyr-band is the Leader himself, who in suffering and heroism surpassed them all; none could so defy the pangs of death as the Lord Jesus, who, for the joy which was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.

I cannot conceive that the pangs of Gethsemane were occasioned by any extraordinary attack from Satan. It is possible that Satan was there, and that his presence may have darkened the shade, but he was not the most prominent cause of that hour of darkness. Thus much is quite clear, that our Lord at the commencement of his ministry engaged in a very severe duel with the prince of darkness, and yet we do not read concerning that temptation in the wilderness a single syllable as to his soul's being exceeding sorrowful, neither do we find that he "was sore amazed and was very heavy," nor is there a solitary hint at anything approaching to bloody sweat. When the Lord of angels condescended to stand foot to foot with the prince of the power of the air, he had no such dread of him as to utter strong cries and tears and fall prostrate on the ground with threefold appeals to the Great Father. Comparatively speaking, to put his foot on the old serpent was an easy task for Christ, and did but cost him a bruised heel, but this Gethsemane agony wounded his very soul even unto death.

What is it then, think you, that so peculiarly marks off Gethsemane and the griefs thereof? We believe that now the Father put him to grief for us. It was now that our Lord had to take a certain cup *from the Father's hand*. Not from the Jews, not from the traitor Judas, not from the sleeping disciples, not from the devil came the trial now, but it was a cup filled by one whom he knew to be his Father, but who nevertheless he understood to have appointed him a very bitter potion, a cup not to be drunk by his body and to spend its gall upon his flesh,

but a cup which specially amazed his soul and troubled his inmost heart. He shrunk from it, and therefore be ye sure that it was a draught more dreadful than physical pain, since from that he did not shrink; it was a potion more dreadful than reproach, from that he had not turned aside; more dreadful than Satanic temptation,—*that* he had overcome: it was a something inconceivably terrible, amazingly full of dread, which came from the Father's hand. This removes all doubt as to what it was, for we read "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." "The Lord hath made to meet on him the iniquity of us all." He hath made him to be sin for us though he knew no sin. This, then, is that which caused the Saviour such extraordinary depression. He was now about to "taste death for every man," to bear the curse which was due to sinners, because he stood in the sinner's place and must suffer in the sinner's stead. Here is the secret of those agonies which it is not possible for me to set forth in order before you, so true is it that—

"Tis to God, and God alone,
That his griefs are fully known."

Yet would I exhort you to consider these griefs awhile, that you may love the sufferer. He now realized, perhaps for the first time, what it was to be a sin bearer. As God he was perfectly holy and incapable of sin, and as man he was without original taint and spotlessly pure; yet he had to bear sin, to be led forth as the scape goat bearing the iniquity of Israel upon his head, to be taken and made a sin offering, and as a loathsome thing (for nothing was more loathsome than the sin offering) to be taken without the camp and utterly consumed with the fire of divine wrath. Do you wonder that his infinite purity started back from that? Would he have been what he was if it had not been a very solemn thing for him to stand before God in the position of a sinner? yea, and as Luther would have said it, to be looked upon by God as if he were all the sinners in the world, and as if he had committed all the sin that ever had been committed by his people, for it was all laid on him, and on him must the vengeance due for it all be poured; he must be the centre of all the vengeance and bear away upon himself what ought to have fallen upon the guilty sons of men. To stand in such a position when once it was realised must have been very terrible to the Redeemer's holy soul. Now also the Saviour's mind was intently fixed upon the dreadful nature of sin. Sin had always been abhorrent to him, but now his thoughts were engrossed with it, he saw its worse than deadly nature, its heinous character, and horrible aim. Probably at this time beyond any former period he had, as man, a view of the wide range and all-pervading evil of sin, and a sense of the blackness of its darkness, and the desperateness of its guilt as being a direct attack upon the throne, yea, and upon the very being of God. He saw in his own person to what lengths sinners would go, how they would sell their Lord like Judas, and seek to destroy him as did the Jews. The cruel and ungenerous treatment he had himself received displayed man's hate of God, and, as he saw it, horror took hold upon him, and his soul was heavy to think that he must bear such an evil and be numbered with such transgressors, to be wounded

for their transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities. Not the wounding nor the bruising distressed him so much as the sin itself, and that utterly overwhelmed his soul.

Then, too, no doubt the penalty of sin began to be realised by him in the Garden—first the sin which had put him in the position of a suffering substitute, and then the penalty which must be borne, because he was in that position. I dread to the last degree that kind of theology which is so common now-a-days, which seeks to depreciate and diminish our estimate of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, that was no trifling suffering which made recompense to the justice of God for the sins of men. I am never afraid of exaggeration, when I speak of what my Lord endured. All hell was distilled into that cup, of which our God and Saviour Jesus Christ was made to drink. It was not eternal suffering, but since he was divine he could in a short time offer unto God a vindication of his justice which sinners in hell could not have offered had they been left to suffer in their own persons for ever. The woe that broke over the Saviour's spirit, the great and fathomless ocean of inexpressible anguish which dashed over the Saviour's soul when he died, is so inconceivable, that I must not venture far, lest I be accused of a vain attempt to express the unutterable; but this I will say, the very spray from that great tempestuous deep, as it fell on Christ, baptised him in a bloody sweat. He had not yet come to the raging billows of the penalty itself, but even standing on the shore, as he heard the awful surf breaking at his feet, his soul was sore amazed and very heavy. It was the shadow of the coming tempest, it was the prelude of the dread desertion which he had to endure, when he stood where we ought to have stood, and paid to his Father's justice the debt which was due from us; it was this which laid him low. To be treated as a sinner, to be smitten as a sinner, though in him was no sin,—this it was which caused him the agony of which our text speaks.

Having thus spoken of the cause of his peculiar grief, I think we shall be able to support our view of the matter, while we lead you to consider, WHAT WAS THE CHARACTER OF THE GRIEF ITSELF? I shall trouble you, as little as possible, with the Greek words used by the evangelists; I have studied each one of them, to try and find out the shades of their meaning, but it will suffice if I give you the results of my careful investigation. What was the grief itself? How was it described? This great sorrow assailed our Lord some four days before he suffered. If you turn to John xii. 27, you find that remarkable utterance, "Now is my soul troubled." We never knew him say that before. This was a foretaste of the great depression of spirit which was so soon to lay him prostrate in Gethsemane. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour." After that we read of him in Matthew xxvi. 37, that "he began to be sorrowful and very heavy." The depression had come over him again. It was not pain, it was not a palpitation of the heart, or an aching of the brow, it was worse than these. Trouble of spirit is worse than pain of body; pain may bring trouble and be the incidental cause of sorrow, but if the mind is perfectly untroubled, how well a man can bear pain, and when the

soul is exhilarated and lifted up with inward joy pain of body is almost forgotten, the soul conquering the body. On the other hand the soul's sorrow will create bodily pain, the lower nature sympathizing with the higher. Our Lord's main suffering lay in his soul—his soul-sufferings were the soul of his sufferings. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Pain of spirit is the worst of pain, sorrow of heart is the climax of griefs. Let those who have ever known sinking spirits, despondency, and mental gloom, attest the truth of what I say!

This sorrow of heart appears to have led to a very deep depression of our Lord's spirit. In the 26th of Matthew, 37th verse, you find it recorded that he was "*very heavy*," and that expression is full of meaning,—of more meaning, indeed, than it would be easy to explain. The word in the original is a very difficult one to translate. It may signify the abstraction of the mind, and its complete occupation by sorrow, to the exclusion of every thought which might have alleviated the distress. One burning thought consumed his whole soul, and burned up all that might have yielded comfort. For awhile his mind refused to dwell upon the result of his death, the consequent joy which was set before him. His position as a sinbearer, and the desertion by his Father which was necessitated thereby, engrossed his contemplations and hurried his soul away from all else. Some have seen in the word a measure of distraction, and though I will not go far in that direction, yet it does seem as if our Saviour's mind underwent perturbations and convulsions widely different from his usual calm, collected spirit. He was tossed to and fro as upon a mighty sea of trouble, which was wrought to tempest, and carried him away in its fury. "We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." As the Psalmist said, innumerable evils compassed him about so that his heart failed him. His heart was melted like wax in the midst of his bowels with sheer dismay. He was "*very heavy*." Some consider the word to signify at its root, "separated from the people," as if he had become unlike other men, even as one whose mind is staggered by a sudden blow, or pressed with some astounding calamity, is no more as ordinary men are. Mere onlookers would have thought our Lord to be a man distraught, burdened beyond the wont of men, and borne down by a sorrow unparalleled among men. The learned Thomas Goodwin says, "The word denotes a failing, deficiency, and sinking of spirit, such as happens to men in sickness and swooning." Epaphroditus' sickness, whereby he was brought near to death, is called by the same word; so that, we see, that Christ's soul was sick and fainted. Was not his sweat produced by exhaustion? The cold, clammy sweat of dying men comes through faintness of body, but the bloody sweat of Jesus came from an utter faintness and prostration of soul. He was in an awful soul-swoon, and suffered an inward death, whose accompaniment was not watery tears from the eyes, but a weeping of blood from the entire man. Many of you, however, know in your measure that it is to be very heavy without my multiplying words in explanation, and if you do not know by personal experience all explanations must be vain. When deep despondency comes on, when you forget everything that would sustain you, and your spirit sinks down, down, down, then can you sympathise with your Lord. Others think you

foolish, call you nervous, and bid you rally yourself, but they know not your case. Did they understand it they would not mock you with such admonitions, impossible to those who are sinking beneath inward woe. Our Lord was "very heavy," very sinking, very despondent, overwhelmed with grief.

Mark tells us next, in his fourteenth chapter and thirty-third verse, that our Lord was "*sore amazed*." The Greek word does not merely import that he was astonished and surprised, but that his amazement went to an extremity of horror, such as men fall into when their hair stands on end and their flesh trembles. As the delivery of the law made Moses exceedingly fear and quake, and as David said, "My flesh trembleth because of thy judgments," so our Lord was stricken with horror at the sight of the sin which was laid upon him and the vengeance which was due on account of it. The Saviour was first "sorrowful," then depressed, and "heavy," and lastly, sore amazed and filled with amazement; for even he as a man could scarce have known what it was that he had undertaken to bear. He had looked at it calmly and quietly, and felt that whatever it was he would bear it for our sake; but when it actually came to the bearing of sin he was utterly astonished and taken aback at the dreadful position of standing in the sinner's place before God, of having his holy Father look upon him as the sinner's representative, and of being forsaken by that Father with whom he had lived on terms of amity and delight from old eternity. It staggered his holy, tender, loving nature, and he was "sore amazed" and was "very heavy."

We are further taught that there surrounded, encompassed, and overwhelmed him an ocean of sorrow, for the thirty-eighth verse of the twenty-sixth of Matthew contains the word *perilupos*, which signifies an encompassing around with sorrows. In all ordinary miseries there is generally some loophole of escape, some breathing place for hope. We can generally remind our friends in trouble that their case might be worse, but in our Lord's griefs worse could not be imagined; for he could say with David, "The pains of hell gat hold upon me." All God's waves and billows went over him. Above him, beneath him, around him, without him, and within, all, all was anguish, neither was there one alleviation or source of consolation. His disciples could not help him,—they were all but one sleeping, and he who was awake was on the road to betray him. His spirit cried out in the presence of the Almighty God beneath the crushing burden and unbearable load of his miseries. No griefs could have gone further than Christ's, and he himself said, "My soul is *exceeding sorrowful*," or surrounded with sorrow "even unto death." He did not die in the garden, but he suffered as much as if he had died. He endured death intensively, though not extensively. It did not extend to the making his body a corpse, but it went as far in pain as if it had been so. His pangs and anguish went up to the mortal agony, and only paused on the verge of death.

Luke, to crown all, tells us in our text, that our Lord was *in an agony*. The expression "agony" signifies a conflict, a contest, a wrestling. With whom was the agony? With whom did he wrestle? I believe it was with himself; the contest here intended was not with his God; no, "not as I will but as thou wilt" does not look like

restling with God; it was not a contest with Satan, for, as we have already seen, he would not have been so sore amazed had that been the conflict, but it was a terrible combat within himself, an agony within his own soul. Remember that he could have escaped from all his grief with one resolve of his will, and naturally the manhood in him said, "Do not bear it!" and the purity of his heart said, "Oh do not bear it, do not stand in the place of the sinner;" and the delicate sensitiveness of his mysterious nature shrank altogether from any form of connection with sin; yet infinite love said, "Bear it, stoop beneath the load"; and so there was agony between the attributes of his nature, a battle on an awful scale in the arena of his soul. The purity which cannot bear to come into contact with sin must have been very mighty in Christ, while the love which would not let his people perish was very mighty too. It was a struggle on a Titanic scale, as if a Hercules had met another Hercules; two tremendous forces strove and fought and agonised within the bleeding heart of Jesus. Nothing causes a man more torture than to be dragged hither and thither with contending emotions; as civil war is the worst and most cruel kind of war, so a war within a man's soul when two great passions in him struggle for the mastery, and both noble passions too, causes a trouble and distress which none but he that feels it can understand. I marvel not that our Lord's sweat was as it were great drops of blood, when such an inward pressure made him like a cluster trodden in the wine-press. I hope I have not presumptuously looked into the ark, or gazed within the veiled holy of holies; God forbid that curiosity or pride should urge me to intrude where the Lord has set a barrier. I have brought you as far as I can, and must again drop the curtain with the words I used just now,

"'Tis to God, and God alone,
That his griefs are fully known."

Our third question shall be, WHAT WAS OUR LORD'S SOLACE IN ALL THIS? He sought help in human companionship, and very natural it was that he should do so. God has created in our human nature a craving for sympathy. We do not amiss when we expect our brethren to watch with us in our hour of trial; but our Lord did not find that men were able to assist him; however willing their spirit might be, their flesh was weak. What, then, did he do? He resorted to prayer, and especially to prayer to God under the character of Father. I have learned by experience that we never know the sweetness of the Fatherhood of God so much as when we are in very bitter anguish; I can understand why the Saviour said "Abba, Father," it was anguish that brought him down as a chastened child to appeal plaintively to a Father's love. In the bitterness of my soul I have cried, "If, indeed, thou be my Father, by the bowels of thy fatherhood have pity on thy child;" and here Jesus pleads with his Father as we have done, and finds comfort in that pleading. Prayer was the channel of the Redeemer's comfort, earnest, intense, reverent, repeated prayer, and after each time of prayer he seems to have grown quiet, and to have gone to his disciples with a measure of restored peace of mind. The sight of their sleeping helped to bring back his griefs, and therefore he returned to pray

again, and each time he was comforted, so that when he had prayed for the third time he was prepared to meet Judas and the soldiers and to go with silent patience to judgment and to death. His great comfort was prayer and submission to the divine will, for when he had laid his own will down at his Father's feet the feebleness of his flesh spoke no more complainingly, but in sweet silence, like a sheep dumb before her shearers, he contained his soul in patience and rest. Dear brothers and sisters, if any of you shall have your Gethsemane and your heavy griefs, imitate your Master by resorting to prayer, by crying to your Father, and by learning submission to his will.

I shall conclude by drawing two or three inferences from the whole subject. May the Holy Spirit instruct us.

The first is this—Learn, dear brethren, *the real humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Do not think of him as God merely, though he is assuredly divine, but feel him to be near of kin to you, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh. How thoroughly can he sympathize with you! He has been burdened with all your burdens and grieved with all your griefs. Are the waters very deep through which you are passing? Yet they are not deep compared with the torrents with which he was buffeted. Never a pang penetrates your spirit to which your covenant Head was a stranger. Jesus can sympathize with you in all your sorrows, for he has suffered far more than you have ever suffered, and is able therefore to succour you in your temptations. Lay hold on Jesus as your familiar friend, your brother born for adversity, and you will have obtained a consolation which will bear you through the uttermost deeps.

Next see here *the intolerable evil of sin*. You are a sinner, which Jesus never was, yet even to stand in the sinner's place was so dreadful to him that he was sorrowful even unto death. What will sin one day be to you if you should be found guilty at the last! Oh, could we tell the horror of sin there is not one among us that would be satisfied to remain in sin for a single moment; I believe there would go up from this house of prayer this morning a weeping and a wailing such as might be heard in the very streets, if men and women here who are living in sin could really know what sin is, and what the wrath of God is that rests upon them, and what the judgments of God will be that will shortly surround them and destroy them. Oh soul, sin must be an awful thing if it so crushed our Lord. If the very imputation of it fetched bloody sweat from the pure and holy Saviour, what must sin itself be? Avoid it, pass not by it, turn away from the very appearance of it, walk humbly and carefully with your God that sin may not harm you, for it is an exceeding plague, an infinite pest.

Learn next, but oh how few minutes have I in which to speak of such a lesson, *the matchless love of Jesus*, that for your sakes and mine he would not merely suffer in body, but consented even to bear the horror of being accounted a sinner, and coming under the wrath of God because of our sins: though it cost him suffering unto death and sore amazement, yet sooner than that we shall perish, the Lord smarted as our surety. Can we not cheerfully endure persecution for his sake? Can we not labour earnestly for him? Are we so ungenerous that his cause shall know a lack while we have the means of helping it?

Are we so base that his work shall flag while we have strength to carry it on? I charge you by Gethsemane, my brethren, if you have a part and lot in the passion of your Saviour, love him much who loved you so immeasurably, and spend and be spent for him.

Again looking at Jesus in the garden, we learn the *excellence and completeness of the atonement*. How black I am, how filthy, how loathsome in the sight of God,—I feel myself only fit to be cast into the lowest hell, and I wonder that God has not long ago cast me there; but I go into Gethsemane, and I peer under those gnarled olive trees, and I see my Saviour. Yes, I see him wallowing on the ground in anguish, and hear such groans come from him as never came from human breast before. I look upon the earth and see it red with his blood, while his face is smeared with gory sweat, and I say to myself, "My God, my Saviour, what aileth thee?" I hear him reply, "I am suffering for thy sin," and then I take comfort, for while I fain would have spared my Lord such an anguish, now that the anguish is over I can understand how Jehovah can spare me, because he smote his Son in my stead. Now I have hope of justification, for I bring before the justice of God and my own conscience the remembrance of my bleeding Saviour, and I say, Canst thou twice demand payment, first at the hand of thy agonising Son and then again at mine? Sinner as I am, I stand before the burning throne of the severity of God, and am not afraid of it. Canst thou scorch me, O consuming fire, when thou hast not only scorched but utterly consumed my substitute? Nay, by faith, my soul sees justice satisfied, the law honoured, the moral government of God established, and yet my once guilty soul absolved and set free. The fire of avenging justice has spent itself, and the law has exhausted its most rigorous demands upon the person of him who was made a curse for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Oh the sweetness of the comfort which flows from the atoning blood! Obtain that comfort, my brethren, and never leave it. Cling to your Lord's bleeding heart, and drink in abundant consolation.

Last of all, *what must be the terror of the punishment which will fall upon those men who reject the atoning blood*, and who will have to stand before God in their own proper persons to suffer for their sins. I will tell you, sirs, with pain in my heart as I tell you it, what will happen to those of you who reject my Lord. Jesus Christ my Lord and Master is a sign and prophecy to you of what will happen to you. Not in a garden, but on that bed of yours where you have so often been refreshed, you will be surprised and overtaken, and the pains of death will get hold upon you. With an exceeding sorrow and remorse for your misspent life and for a rejected Saviour you will be made very heavy. Then will your darling sin, your favourite lust, like another Judas, betray you with a kiss. While yet your soul lingers on your lip you will be seized and taken off by a body of evil ones, and carried away to the bar of God, just as Jesus was taken to the judgment seat of Caiaphas. There shall be a speedy, personal, and somewhat private judgment, by which you shall be committed to prison where, in darkness and weeping, and wailing, you shall spend the night before the great assize of the judgment morning. Then shall the day break and the resurrection morning come, and as our Lord then appeared before Pilate, so will you appear

before the highest tribunal, not that of Pilate, but the dread judgment seat of the Son of God, whom you have despised and rejected. Then will witnesses come against you, not false witnesses, but true, and you will stand speechless, even as Jesus said not a word before his accusers. Then will conscience and despair buffet you, until you will become such a monument of misery, such a spectacle of contempt, as to be fitly noted by another *Ecce Homo*, and men shall look at you and say, "Behold the man and the suffering which has come upon him, because he despised his God and found pleasure in sin." Then shall you be condemned. "Depart, ye cursed," shall be your sentence, even as "Let him be crucified" was the doom of Jesus. You shall be taken away, by the officers of justice to your doom. Then like the sinner's substitute you will cry, "I thirst," but not a drop of water shall be given you; you shall taste nothing but the gall of bitterness. You shall be executed publicly with your crimes written over your head that all may read and understand that you are justly condemned; and then will you be mocked as Jesus was, especially if you have been a professor of religion and a false one; all that pass by will say, "He saved others, he preached to others, but himself he cannot save." God himself will mock you. Nay, think not I dream, has he not said it: "I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh"? Cry unto your gods, that you once trusted in! Get comfort out of the lusts ye once delighted in, O ye that are cast away for ever! To your shame, and to the confusion of your nakedness, shall you that have despised the Saviour be made a spectacle of the justice of God for ever. It is right it should be so, justice rightly demands it. Sin made the Saviour suffer an agony, shall it not make you suffer? Moreover, in addition to your sin, you have rejected the Saviour; you have said, "He shall not be my trust and confidence." Voluntarily, presumptuously, and against your own conscience you have refused eternal life; and if you die rejecting mercy what can come of it but that first your sin, and secondly your unbelief, shall condemn you to misery without limit or end. Let Gethsemane warn you, let its groans, and tears, and bloody sweat admonish you. Repent of sin, and believe in Jesus. May his Spirit enable you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark xiv. 32—42
and Psalm xl.

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THE POWER OF THE RISEN SAVIOUR.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 25TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."—Matthew xxviii. 18—20.

THE change from "the man of sorrows" before his crucifixion to the "Lord over all" after his resurrection is very striking. Before his passion he was well known by his disciples, and appeared only in one form, as the Son of man, clad in the common peasant's garment without seam, woven from the top throughout; but after he had risen from the dead he was on several occasions unrecognized by those who loved him best, and is once at least described as having appeared to certain of them "under another form." He was the same person, for they saw his hands and his feet, and Thomas even handled him, and placed his finger in the print of the nails; but yet it would seem that some gleams of his glory were at times manifested to them, a glory which had been hidden during his previous life, save only when he stood on the Mount of Transfiguration. Before his death, his appearances were to the general public—he stood in the midst of Scribes and Pharisees and publicans and sinners, and preached the glad tidings; but now he appeared only to his disciples, sometimes to one, at another time to two, on one occasion to about five hundred brethren at once, but always to his disciples, and to them only. Before his death his preaching was full of parable, plain to those who had understanding, but often dark and mysterious even to his own followers, for it was a judgment from the Lord upon that evil generation that seeing they should not see, and hearing they should not perceive. Yet with equal truth we may say that our Lord before his death brought down his teaching to the comprehension of the uninstructed minds which listened to it, so that any of the deeper truths were slightly touched upon because they were not able to bear them as yet. Till his crucifixion he veiled the

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effulgence of many truths, but after his resurrection he spake no more in parables, but introduced his disciples into the inner circle of the great doctrines of the kingdom, and as it were showed himself face to face to them. Before his death the Lord Jesus was ever with his followers, and even the secret places of his retirement were known to them, but after he had risen he came and went among them at irregular intervals. Where he was during many of those forty days who among us can tell? He was seen in the garden upon Olivet, he walked to Emmaus, he comforted the assembly at Jerusalem, he showed himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, but where went he when, after the various interviews, he vanished out of their sight? They were in the room alone, the doors were shut, and suddenly he stood in the midst of them; again he called to them from the sea-beach, and on landing they found a fire of coals kindled, and fish laid thereon, and bread; his appearances were strange, and his disappearings equally so. Everything betokened that, after he had risen from the dead, he had undergone some marvellous change, which had revealed in him that which had been concealed before, though still his identity was indisputable.

It was no small honour to have seen our risen Lord while yet he lingered here below. What must it be to see Jesus as he is now! He is the same Jesus as when he was here; yonder memorials as of a lamb that has been slain assure us that he is the same man. Glorified in heaven his real manhood sits, and it is capable of being beheld by the eye, and heard by the ear, but yet how different. Had we seen him in his agony, we should all the more admire his glory. Dwell with your hearts very much upon Christ crucified, but indulge yourselves full often with a sight of Christ glorified. Delight to think that he is not here, for he is risen; he is not here, for he has ascended; he is not here, for he sits at the right hand of God, and maketh intercession for us. Let your souls travel frequently the blessed highway from the sepulchre to the throne. As in Rome there was a *Via Sacra* along which returning conquerors went from the gates of the city up to the heights of the Capitol, so is there another *Via Sacra* which you ought often to survey, for along it the risen Saviour went in glorious majesty from the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea up to the eternal dignities of his Father's right hand. Your soul will do well to see her dawn of hope in his death, and her full assurance of hope in his risen life.

To-day my business is to show, as far as God the Spirit may help me, first, *Our Lord's resurrection power*; and secondly, *Our Lord's mode of exercising the spiritual part of that power so far as we are concerned*.

I. OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION POWER. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." At the risk of repeating myself, I should like to begin this head by asking you to remember last Sabbath morning's sermon, when we went to Gethsemane, and bowed our spirits in the shade of those grey olives, at the sight of the bloody sweat. What a contrast between that and this! There you saw the weakness of man, the bowing, the prostrating, the crushing of the manhood of the Mediator; but here you see the strength of the God-man—he is girt with omnipotence, though still on earth when he

spoke these words he had received a privilege, honour, glory, fulness and power which lifted him far above the sons of men. He was, as Mediator, no more a sufferer, but a sovereign; no more a victim, but a victor; no more a servant, but the monarch of earth and heaven. Yet he had never received such power if he had not endured such weakness. All power had never been given to the Mediator if all comfort had not been taken away. He stooped to conquer. The way to his throne was downward. Mounting upon steps of ivory, Solomon ascended to his throne of gold; but Our Lord and Master descended that he might ascend, and went down into the awful deeps of agony unutterable that all power in heaven and earth might belong to him as our Redeemer and Covenant Head.

Now think a moment of these words, "*All power.*" Jesus Christ has given to him by his Father, as a consequence of his death, "*all power.*" It is but another way of saying that the Mediator possesses omnipotence, for omnipotence is but the Latin of "*all power.*" What mind shall conceive, what tongue shall set in order before you, the meaning of all power? We cannot grasp it; it is high, we cannot attain unto it. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us. The power of self-existence, the power of creation, the power of sustaining that which is made, the power of fashioning and destroying, the power of opening and shutting, of overthrowing or establishing, of killing and making alive, the power to pardon and to condemn, to give and to withhold, to decree and to fulfil, to be, in a word, "*head over all things to his church,*"—all this is vested in Jesus Christ-our Lord. We might as well attempt to describe infinity, or map the boundless as to tell what "*all power*" must mean; but whatever it is, it is all *given* to our Lord, all lodged in those hands which once were fastened to the wood of shame, all left with that heart which was pierced with the spear, all placed as a crown upon that head which was surrounded with a coronet of thorns.

"*All power in heaven*" is his. Observe that! Then he has the power of God, for God is in heaven, and the power of God emanates from that central throne. Jesus, then, has divine power. Whatever Jehovah can do Jesus can do. If it were his will to speak another world into existence, we should see to-night a fresh star adorning the brow of night. Were it his will at once to fold up creation like a worn out vesture, lo the elements would pass away, and yonder heavens would be shrivelled like a scroll. The power which binds the sweet influences of the Pleiades and looses the bands of Orion is with the Nazarene, the Crucified leads forth Arcturus with his sons. Angelic bands are waiting on the wing to do the bidding of Jesus of Nazareth, and cherubim and seraphim and the four living creatures before the throne unceasingly obey him. He who was despised and rejected of men now commands the homage of all heaven, as "*God over all, blessed for ever.*"

"*All power in heaven*" relates to the providential skill and might with which God rules everything in the universe. He holds the reins of all created forces, and impels or restrains them at his will, giving force to law, and life to all existence. The old heathen dreamed of Apollo as driving the chariot of the sun and guiding its fiery steeds



in their daily course, but it is not so: Jesus is Lord of all. He harnesses the winds to his chariot, and thrusts a bit into the mouth of the tempest, doing as he wills among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of this lower world. From him in heaven emanates the power which sustains and governs this globe, for the Father hath committed all things into his hands. "By him all things consist."

"All power" must include—and this is a practical point to us—all the power of the Holy Ghost. In the work which lies nearest our heart the Holy Spirit is the great force. It is he that convinces men of sin, and leads them to a Saviour, gives them new hearts and right spirits, and plants them in the church, and then causes them to grow and become fruitful. The power of the Holy Ghost goes forth among the sons of men according to the will of our Lord. As the anointing oil poured upon Aaron's head ran down his beard, and bedewed the skirts of his garments, so the Spirit which has been granted to him without measure flows from him to us. He hath the residue of the Spirit, and according to his will the Holy Ghost goeth forth into the church, and from the church into the world, to the accomplishment of the purposes of saving grace. It is not possible that the church should fail for want of spiritual gifts or influence while her heavenly Bridegroom has such overflowing stores of both.

All the power of the sacred Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, is at the command of Jesus, who is exalted far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come.

Our Lord also claimed that all power had been given to him *on earth*. This is more than could be truly said by any mere man; none of mortal race may claim all power in heaven, and when they aspire to all power on earth it is but a dream. Universal monarchy has been strained after; it has seldom, if ever, been attained; and when it seemed within the clutch of ambition it has melted away like a snowflake before the sun. Indeed, if men could rule all their fellows, yet they would not have all power on earth, for there are other forces which scorn their control. Fell diseases laugh at the power of men. The King of Israel, when Naaman came to him to be recovered of his leprosy, cried, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" He had not all power. Winds and waves, moreover, scorn mortal rule. It is not true that even Britannia rules the waves. Canute, to rebuke his courtiers, places his throne at the margin of the tide, and commands the billows to take care that they wet not the feet of their royal master; but his courtiers were soon covered with spray, and the monarch proved that "all power" was not given to him. Frogs and locusts and flies were more than a match for Pharaoh; the greatest of men are defeated by the weak things of God. Nebuchadnezzar, struck with madness and herding with cattle, was an illustration of the shadowy nature of all human power. The proudest princes have been made to feel by sickness, and pain, and death that after all they were but men; and oftentimes their weaknesses have been such as to make the more apparent the truth that power belongeth unto God, and unto God alone, so that when he entrusts a little of it to the sons of men, it is so little that

they are fools if they boast thereof. See ye, then, before us a wonder ! A man who has power over all things on earth without exception, and is obeyed by all creatures, great and small, because the Lord Jehovah has put all things under his feet.

For our purposes it will be most important for us to remember that our Lord has "all power" over the minds of men, both good and bad. He calleth whomsoever he pleaseth into his fellowship, and they obey. Having called them, he is able to sanctify them to the highest point of holiness, working in them all the good pleasure of his will with power. The saints can be so influenced by our Lord, through the Holy Ghost, that they can be impelled to the divinest ardours, and elevated to the sublimest frames of mind. Often do I pray, and I doubt not the prayer has come from you too, that God would raise up leaders in the church, men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, standard-bearers in the day of battle. The preachers of the gospel who preach with any power are few ; still might John say, "Ye have not many fathers." More precious than the gold of Ophir are men who stand out as pillars of the Lord's house, bulwarks of the truth, champions in the camp of Israel. How few are our apostolic men ! We want again Luthers, Calvins, Bunyans, Whitfields, men fit to mark eras, whose names breathe terror in our foemen's ears. We have dire need of such. Where are they ? Whence will they come to us ? We cannot tell in what farmhouse or village smithy, or school house such men may be, but our Lord has them in store. They are the gifts of Jesus Christ to the church, and will come in due time. He has power to give us back again a golden age of preachers, a time as fertile of great divines and mighty ministers as was the Puritan age, which many of us account to have been the golden age of theology. He can send again the men of studious heart to search the word and bring forth its treasures, the men of wisdom and experience rightly to divide it, the golden-mouthed speakers who, either as sons of thunder or sons of consolation, shall deliver the message of the Lord with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. When the Redeemer ascended on high he received gifts for men, and those gifts were men fitted to accomplish the edification of the church, such as evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These he is still able to bestow upon his people, and it is their duty to pray for them, and when they come, to receive them with gratitude. Let us believe in the power of Jesus to give us valiant men and men of renown, and we little know how soon he will supply them.

Since all power on earth is lodged in Christ's hands, he can also clothe any and all of his servants with a sacred might, by which their hands shall be sufficient for them in their high calling. Without bringing them forth into the front ranks he can make them occupy their appointed stations till he comes, girt with a power which shall make them useful. My brother, the Lord Jesus can make you eminently prosperous in the sphere in which he has placed you ; my sister, your Lord can bless the little children who gather at your knee through your means. You are very feeble, and you know it, but there is no reason why you should not be strong in him. If you look to the strong for strength he can endue you with power from on high, and say to you as to Gideon, "Go in this thy might." Your slowness of speech need not

disqualify you, for he will be with your mouth as with Moses. Your want of culture need not hinder you, for Shamgar with his oxgoad smote the Philistines, and Amos, the prophet, was a herdsman. Like Paul, your personal presence may be despised as weak, and your speech as contemptible, but yet like him you may learn to glory in infirmity, because the power of God doth rest upon you. Ye are not straitened in the Lord, but in yourselves, if straitened at all. You may be as dry as Aaron's rod, but he can make you bud and blossom, and bring forth fruit. You may be as nearly empty as the widow's cruse, yet will he cause you still to overflow towards his saints. You may feel yourself to be as near sinking as Peter amid the waves, yet will he keep you from your fears. You may be as unsuccessful as the disciples who had toiled all night and taken nothing, yet he can fill your boat till it can hold no more. No man knows what the Lord can make of him, nor what he may do by him, only this we do know assuredly that "all power" is with him by whom we were redeemed, and to whom we belong. Oh, believers, resort ye to your Lord, to receive out of his fulness grace for grace. Because of this power we believe that if Jesus willed he could stir the whole church at once to the utmost energy. Does she sleep? His voice can awaken her. Does she restrain prayer? His grace can stimulate her to devotion. Has she grown unbelieving? He can restore her ancient faith. Does she turn her back in the day of battle, troubled with scepticisms and doubts? He can restore her unwavering confidence in the gospel, and make her valiant till all her sons shall be heroes of faith and put to flight the armies of the aliens. Let us believe, and we shall see the glory of God. Let us believe, I say, and once again our conquering days shall come, when one shall chase a thousand, and two shall put ten thousand to flight. Never despair for the church; be anxious for her, and turn your anxiety into prayer, but be hopeful evermore, for her Redeemer is mighty and will stir up his strength. "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." Degenerate as we are, there standeth one among us whom the world seeth not, whose shoe's latchet we are not worthy to unloose: he shall again baptise us with the Holy Ghost and with fire, for "all power is given unto him."

It is equally true that all power is given unto our Lord over the whole of mankind, even over that part of the race which rejects and continues in wilful rebellion. He can use the ungodly for his purposes. We have it on inspired authority that Herod and Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatsoever the Lord's hand and counsel determined before to be done. Their utmost wickedness did but fulfil the determinate counsel of God. Thus doth he make wrath of man to praise him, and the most rebellious wills to be subservient to his sacred purposes. Jesu's kingdom ruleth over all. The powers of hell and all their hosts, with the kings of the earth, and the rulers set themselves and take counsel together, and all the while their rage is working out his designs. Little do they know that they are but drudges to the King of Kings, scullions in the kitchen of his imperial palace. All things do his bidding, his will is not thwarted, his resolves are not defeated; the pleasure of the Lord prospers in his hands. By faith I see him ruling and overruling

land and sea, and in all deep places. Guiding the decisions of parliaments, dictating to dictators, commanding princes, and ruling emperors. Let him but arise, and they that hate him shall flee before him; as smoke is driven, so will he drive them away; as wax melteth before the fire, so shall all his enemies perish at his presence.

As to *sinful men* in general, the Redeemer has power over their minds in a manner wonderful to contemplate. At the present moment we very much deplore the fact that the current of public thought runs strongly towards Popery, which is the alias of idolatry. Just as, in old Testament history, the people of Israel were always breaking away from their idols, so is it with this nation. The Israelites were cured of their sin for a little while, so long as some great teacher or judge had power among them, but at his death they turned aside to worship the queen of heaven or the calves of Bethel, or some other visible symbols. So it is now. Men are mad after the idols of old Rome. They are turning the old churches into joss-houses, and building new ones on all sides. Idol-temples are becoming as numerous in London as in Calcutta. The worshippers and priests call themselves Christians, but they might better call themselves wafer-worshippers or adorers of a fetish made of flour and water, for that is nearer the truth. Well, what next? Are we despairing? God forbid that we should ever despond while all power is in the hand of Jesus. He can turn the whole current of thought in an opposite direction, and that right speedily. Did you not observe when the Prince of Wales was ill some months ago that everybody paid respect to the doctrine of prayer? Did you not notice how the *Times* and other newspapers spoke right believably as to prayer? At this moment it is fashionable to pooh-pooh the idea of God's hearing our requests; but it was not so then. A great philosopher has told us that it is absurd to suppose that prayer can have any effect upon the events of life; but God has only to visit the nation with some judgment severely felt by all and your philosopher will become as quiet as a mouse. In the same way, I am firmly persuaded that, by one turn of the wheel of Providence, the Popery which is now so fashionable will be made, as it has been before, a red rag to set mobs a rioting, and my lords and ladies, instead of hastening to the Pope, will be most anxious to disown all connection with the whole concern. To my mind it matters very little which way these fine folks go at any time, except that they are the straws which show which way the wind blows. I repeat it, the current of thought can readily be turned by our Lord; he can as easily manage it as the miller controls the stream which flows over his wheel, or rushes past it. The times are safe in our Redeemer's management, he is mightier than the devil, the Pope, the infidel, and the ritualist, all put together. All glory be to him who has all power in earth and heaven.

So too, our Lord can give, and he does give to the people an inclination to hear the gospel. Never be afraid of getting a congregation when the gospel is your theme. Jesus, who gives you a consecrated tongue, will find willing ears to listen to you. At his bidding deserted sanctuaries grow crowded, and the people throng to hear the joyful sound. Ay, and he can do more than that, for he can make the word powerful to the conversion of thousands. He can constrain

the frivolous to think, the obstinately heretical to accept the truth, and those who set their faces like a flint to yield to his gracious sway. He has the key of every human heart; he openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth. He will clothe his word with power and subdue the nations thereby. It is ours to proclaim the gospel, and to believe that no man is beyond the saving power of Jesus Christ. Doubly dyed, yea, sevenfold steeped in the scarlet dye of vice, the sinner may be cleansed, and the ringleader in vice may become a pattern of holiness. The Pharisee can be converted—was not Paul? Even priests may be saved, for did not a great multitude of the priests believe? There is no man in any conceivable position of sin, who is beyond the power of Christ. He may be gone to the uttermost in sin, so as to stand on the verge of hell, but if Jesus stretch out his pierced hand, he will be plucked like a brand out of the burning.

My soul glows as I think of what my Lord can do. If all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, then this morning he could convert, pardon, and save every man and woman in this place; nay, he could influence the four millions of this city to cry, "What must we do to be saved?" Nor in this city only could he work, but throughout the whole earth: if it seemed good to his infinite wisdom and power he could make every sermon to be the means of conversion of all who heard it, every Bible and every copy of the Word to become the channel of salvation to all who read it, and I know not in how short a time the cry would be heard, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Heard that cry shall be, rest assured of that. We are on the conquering side. We have with us One who is infinitely greater than all that can be against us, since "all power" is given unto him.

Brethren, we have no doubts, we entertain no fears, for every moment of time is bringing on the grand display of the power of Jesus. We preach to-day, and some of you despise the gospel; we bring Christ before you, and you reject him; but God will change his hand with you before long, and your despisings and your rejectings will then come to an end, for that same Jesus who went from Olivet, and ascended into heaven, will so come in like manner as he was seen to go up into heaven. He will descend with matchless pomp and power, and this astonished world which saw him crucified shall see him enthroned; and in the self same place where men dogged his heels and persecuted him, they shall crowd around him to pay him homage, for he must reign, and put his enemies under his feet. This same earth shall be gladdened by his triumphs which once was troubled with his griefs. And more. You may be dead before the Lord shall come, and your bodies may be rotting in the tomb, but you will know that all power is his, for at the blast of his trumpet your bodies shall rise again to stand before his terrible judgment seat. You may have resisted him here, but you will be unable to oppose him then; you may despise him now, but then you must tremble before him. "Depart ye cursed," will be to you a terrible proof that he has "all power," if you will not now accept another and a sweeter proof of it by coming unto him who bids the labouring and heavy laden partake of his rest. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his

wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

II. I have, secondly, by your patience, to show OUR LORD'S USUAL MODE OF EXERCISING HIS GREAT SPIRITUAL POWER. Brethren, the Lord Jesus might have said, "All power is given to me in heaven and earth; take ye then your swords and slay all these my enemies who crucified me." But he had no thoughts of revenge. He might have said, "These Jews put me to death, therefore go ye straightway to the Isles and to Tarshish and preach, for these men shall never taste of my grace," but no, he expressly said, "beginning at Jerusalem," and bade his disciples first preach the Gospel to his murderers. In consequence of his having "all power" his servants were bidden to disciple all nations. My brethren, the method by which Jesus proposes to subdue all things unto himself appears to be utterly inadequate. To teach, to make disciples, to baptize these disciples, and to instruct them further in the faith! Good Master, are these the weapons of our warfare? Are these thy battleaxe and weapons of war? Not thus do the princes of this world contemplate conquest, for they rely on monster guns, ironclads, and engines of death-doing power. Yet what are these but proofs of their weakness? Had they all power in themselves they would not need such instruments. Only he who has all power can work his bidding by a word, and dispense with all force but that of love.

Mark that *teaching and preaching are the Lord's way of displaying his power*. To-day they tell us that the way to save souls is to rig out an altar with different coloured silks and satins, variable according to the almanack, and to array priests in garments of divers colours, "of divers colours of needlework, on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil," and to make men wear petticoats, dishonourable to their sex. With these ribbons and embroideries, joined with incense-burning, posturing, and incantations, souls are to be saved! "Not so," saith the Master, but "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Do any of you fear that, after all, the preaching of the gospel will be defeated in this land of ours by these new editions of the old idolatry? God forbid. If there were only one of us left to preach the gospel, he would be a match for ten thousand priests. Only give us still the tongue which is set on fire by the Holy Ghost, and an open Bible, and one solitary preacher would rout the whole rabble of your monks and friars and father-confessors, sisters of misery, and nuns, and pilgrims, and bishops, and cardinals, and popes: because preaching and teaching and baptizing the disciples are Christ's way, and priestcraft is not Christ's way. If Christ had ordained sacramental efficacy it would succeed, but he has ordained nothing of the kind; his mandate is—All power is given unto me in heaven and earth, go ye, therefore, disciple, baptize, and then still further instruct in the name of the Triune God.

My brethren, remember who the men were who were sent on this errand. The eleven who were foremost were mostly fishermen. Does the omnipotent Jesus choose fishermen to subdue the world? He does, because he needs no help from them; all power is his. We must have an educated ministry, they tell us; and by "an educated ministry"

they mean, not the ministry of a man of common sense, clear head and warm heart, deep experience, and large acquaintance with human nature, but the ministry of mere classical and mathematical students, theorists, and novices, more learned in modern infidelities than in the truth of God. Our Lord, if he had wished to employ the worldly-wise, might certainly have chosen an eleven in Corinth or in Athens who would have commanded general respect for their attainments, or he could have found eleven learned rabbis near at home; but he did not want such men: their vaunted attainments were of no value in his eyes. He chose honest, hearty men who were childlike enough to learn the truth, and bold enough to speak it when they knew it. The church must get rid of her notion that she must depend on the learning of this world. Against a sound education we cannot have a word to say, especially an education in the Scriptures, but to place learned degrees in the place of the gift of the Holy Spirit, or to value the present style of so-called culture above the spiritual edification of our manhood, is to set up an idol in the house of the living God. The Lord can as well use the most illiterate man as the most learned, if so it pleaseth him. "Go ye," he said, "ye fishermen, go ye, and teach all nations." Carnal reason's criticism on this is,—a feeble method to be worked out by feebler instruments!

Now let it be noted here that the work of preaching the gospel, which is Christ's way of using his power among men, is based only upon his having that power. Harken to some of my brethren; they say, "You must not preach the gospel to a dead sinner, because the sinner has no power." Just so, but our reason for preaching to him is that all power is given unto Jesus, and he bids us preach the gospel to every creature. "But when you tell a sinner to believe, you have not the power to make him believe." Truly so, nor do we dream that we have, for all power lies in Christ. Neither in the sinner is there power to believe, nor in the preacher power to make him believe, all power is in our Lord. "But do you think," say they, "that your persuasions will ever make a man repent and believe?" Certainly not. The power that leads men to repent and believe does not lie in rhetoric or in reason, or in persuasion, but in him who says, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." I tell you this, if my Lord and Master should bid me go to-morrow to Norwood cemetery and bid the dead to rise I would do it with as much pleasure as I now preach the gospel to this congregation; and I would do it for the same reason which now leads me to urge the unregenerated to repent and be converted; for I regard men as being dead in sin, and yet I tell them to live, because my Master commands me to do so: that I am right in thus acting is proved by the fact that while I am preaching sinners do live; blessed be his name, thousands of them have been quickened into life. Ezekiel had to cry, "Ye dry bones, live." What a foolish thing to say! But God justified his servant in it, and an exceeding great army stood upon their feet in what was once a large charnel house. Joshua's men were bidden to blow their trumpets around Jericho—a most absurd thing to blow a trumpet to fetch city walls down—but they came down for all that. Gideon's men were bidden simply to carry lamps within their pitchers, and to break their pitchers, and

stand still and cry aloud, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon,"—a most ridiculous thing to hope by this means to smite the Midianites,—but they were smitten, for God never sends his servants on a fool's errand. It pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to accomplish his divine purposes, not because of the power of preaching, nor the power of the preacher, nor any power in those preached to, but because 'all power' is given unto Christ "in heaven and in earth," and he chooses to work by the teaching of the Word.

Our business, then, is just this. We are to teach, or as the Greek word has it, to make disciples. Our business is, each one according to the grace given, to tell our fellow men the gospel, and to try and disciple them to Jesus. When they become disciples, our next duty is to give them the sign of discipleship, by "baptising them." That symbolic burial sets forth their death in Jesus to their former selves and their resurrection to newness of life through him. Baptism enrolls and seals the disciples, and we must not omit or misplace it. When the disciple is enrolled, the missionary is to become the pastor, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The disciple is admitted into the school by obeying the Saviour's command as to baptism, and then he goes on to learn, and as he learns he teaches others also. He is taught obedience, not to some things, but to all things which Christ has commanded. He is put into the church not to become a legislator or a deviser of new doctrines and ceremonies, but to believe what Christ tells him, and to do what Christ bids him. Thus our Lord intends to set up a kingdom which shall break in pieces every other; those who know him are to teach others; and so from one to the other, the wondrous power which Christ brought from heaven shall spread from land to land. See, then, my brethren, your high calling, and see also the support you have in pursuing it. In the van behold "all power" going forth from Christ! In the rear behold the Lord himself,—“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” If you are enlisted in this army, I charge you be faithful to your great captain, do his work carefully in the way which he has prescribed for you, and expect to see his power displayed to his own glory.

I would close this sermon very practically. The greater part of my congregation at this time consists of persons who have believed in Jesus, who have been baptised, and have been further instructed. You believe that Jesus has all power, and that he works through the teaching and preaching of the gospel, and therefore I wish to press you with a home question. How much are you doing as to teaching all nations? This charge is committed to you as well as to me; for this purpose are we sent into the world; ourselves receivers that we may be afterwards distributors. How much have you distributed? Dear mother, dear sister, to how many have you told the story of redemption by the blood of Jesus? You have been a convert now for some time: to whom have you spoken of Jesus, or to whom have you written? Are you distributing as best you can the words of others if you are not capable of putting words together yourself? Do not reply, "I belong to a church which is doing much." That is not to the point. I am speaking of that which you are personally doing. Jesus did not die

for us by proxy, but he bore our sins in his own body on the tree. I ask, then, what are you personally doing? Are you doing anything at all? "But I cannot go for a missionary," says one. Are you sure you cannot? I have been long looking for a time when numbers of you will feel that you must go to preach the gospel abroad, and will relinquish comforts and emoluments for the Lord's sake. I shall never feel that we have reached the full degree of Christian zeal until it becomes a very common thing among us to have young brethren, such as the two who left us a little while ago, consecrating themselves to the grandest of all services. Perhaps some among you have that intent half formed in your hearts; I hope you will not repress it, and that your parents will not hinder you from the blessed sacrifice. There can be no greater honour to a church than to have many sons and daughters bearing the brunt of the battle for the Lord. Lo, I set up a standard among you this day, let those whose hearts God has touched rally to it without delay. The heathen are perishing; they are dying by millions without Christ, and Christ's last command to us is "Go ye, teach all nations:" are you obeying it? "I cannot go," says one, "I have a family and many ties to bind me at home." My dear brother, then, I ask you, are you going as far as you can? Do you travel to the utmost length of the providential tether which has fastened you where you are? Can you say "Yes." Then, what are you doing to help others to go? As I was thinking over this discourse, I reflected how very little we were most of us doing towards sending the gospel abroad. We are, as a church, doing a fair share for our heathen at home, and I rejoice at the thought of it; but how much a year do you each give to foreign missions? I wish you would put down in your pocket-book how much you give per annum for missions, and then calculate how much per cent. it is of your income. There let it stand—"Item: Gave to the collection last April . . . 1s." One shilling a year towards the salvation of the world. Perhaps it will run thus—"Item: Income £5000, annual subscription to mission £1." How does that look? I cannot read your hearts, but I could read your pocket-books and work a sum in proportion. I suggest that you do it yourselves, while I also take a look at my own expenditure. Let us all see what more can be done for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, for all power is with him; and when his people shall be stirred up to believe in that power, and to use the simple but potent machinery of the preaching of the Gospel to all nations, then God, even our own God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark xvi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—337, 679, 332.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PROVIDENCE—AS SEEN IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 1ST, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

Though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that sed them."—Esther ix. 1.

You are probably aware that some persons have denied the inspiration of the Book of Esther because the name of God does not occur in it. They might with equal justice deny the inspiration of a great number of chapters in the Bible, and of a far greater number of verses. Though the name of God does not occur in the Book of Esther, the Lord himself is there most conspicuously in every incident which it relates. I have seen portraits bearing the names of persons for whom they were intended, and they certainly needed them, but we have all others which required no name, because they were such striking likenesses that the moment you looked upon them you knew them. In the Book of Esther, as much as in any other part of the word of God, if I had almost committed myself by saying—more than anywhere else, the hand of Providence is manifestly to be seen.

To condense the whole of the story of the Book of Esther into one sermon would be impossible, and therefore I must rely upon your previous acquaintance with it; I must also ask your patience if there should be more of history in the sermon than is usual with me. All scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable, whether it be history or doctrine. God never meant the Book of Esther to lie dumb, but whatever it seemed good to him to teach us by it, it ought to be our earnest endeavour to learn.

The Lord intended by the narrative of Esther's history to set before us a wonderful instance of his providence, that when we had viewed it with interest and pleasure, we might praise his name, and then go on to acquire the habit of observing his hand in other histories, and especially in our own lives. Well does Flavel say, that he who serves providence will never be long without a providence to observe. A man who can walk through the world and see no God, is said

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upon inspired authority to be a fool; but the wise man's eyes are in his head, he sees with an inner sight, and discovers God everywhere at work. It is his joy to perceive that the Lord is working according to his will in heaven, and earth, and in all deep places.

It has pleased God at different times in history to startle the heathen world into a conviction of his presence. He had a chosen people, to whom he committed the true light, and to these he revealed himself continually: the rest of the world was left in darkness, but every now and then the divine glory flamed through the gloom, as the lightning pierces the blackness of tempest. Some by that sudden light were led to seek after God, and found him; others were rendered uneasy, and without excuse, though they continued in their blind idolatry. The wonderful destruction of Pharaoh and his armies at the Red Sea was a burst of light, which startled the midnight of the world by giving proof to mankind that the Lord lived, and could accomplish his purposes by suspending the laws of nature and working miracles. The marvellous drama enacted at Shushan, the capital of Persia, was intended to be another manifestation of the being and glory of God, working not as formerly, by a miracle, but in the usual methods of his providence, and yet accomplishing all his designs. It has been well said that the Book of Esther is a record of wonders without a miracle, and therefore, though equally revealing the glory of the Lord, it sets it forth in another fashion from that which is displayed in the overthrow of Pharaoh by miraculous power.

Let us come now to the story. There were two races, one of which God had blessed and promised to preserve, and another of which he had said that he would utterly put out the remembrance of it from under heaven. Israel was to be blessed and made a blessing, but of Amalek the Lord had sworn that "The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." These two peoples were therefore in deadly hostility, like the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, between whom the Lord himself has put an enmity. Many years had rolled away; the chosen people were in great distress, and at this far off time there still existed upon the face of the earth some relics of the race of Amalek; among them was one descended of the royal line of Agag, whose name was Haman, and he was in supreme power at the court of Ahasuerus, the Persian monarch. Now it was God's intent that a last conflict should take place between Israel and Amalek: the conflict which began with Joshua in the desert was to be finished by Mordecai in the king's palace. This last struggle began with great disadvantage to God's people. Haman was prime minister of the far-extending empire of Persia, the favourite of a despotic monarch, who was pliant to his will. Mordecai, a Jew in the employment of the king, sat in the king's gate; and when he saw proud Haman go to and fro, he refused to pay to him the homage which others rendered obsequiously. He would not bow his head or bend his knee to him, and this galled Haman exceedingly. It came into his mind that this Mordecai was of the seed of the Jews, and with the remembrance came the high ambition to avenge the quarrel of his race. He thought it scorn to touch one man, and resolved that in himself he would incarnate all the hate of generations, and at one blow sweep the accursed Jews, as

he thought them, from off the face of the earth. He went in to the king, with whom his word was power, and told him that there was a singular people scattered up and down the Persian empire, different from all others, and opposed to the king's laws, and that it was not for the king's profit to suffer them. He asked that they might all be destroyed, and he would pay into the king's treasury an enormous sum of money to compensate for any loss of revenue by their destruction. He intended that the spoil which would be taken from the Jews should tempt their neighbours to kill them, and that the part allotted to himself should repay the amount which he advanced, thus he would make the Jews pay for their own murder. He had no sooner asked for this horrible grant than the monarch conceded it; taking his signet ring from off his finger, he bade him do with the Jews as seemed good to him. Thus the chosen seed are in the hands of the Agagite, who thirsts to annihilate them. Only one thing stands in the way, the Lord has said, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." We shall see what happens, and learn from it.

I. First, we shall learn from the narrative that GOD PLACES HIS AGENTS IN FITTING PLACES FOR DOING HIS WORK. The Lord was not taken by surprise by this plot of Haman; he had foreseen it and forestalled it. It was needful, in order to match this cunning, malicious design of Haman, that some one of Jewish race should possess great influence with the king. How was this to be effected? Should a Jewess become Queen of Persia, the power she would possess would be useful in counteracting the enemy's design. This had been all arranged years before Haman had concocted in his wicked heart the scheme of murdering the Jews. Esther, whose sweet name signifies myrtle, had been elevated to the position of Queen of Persia by a singular course of events. It happened that Ahasuerus, at a certain drinking bout, was so far gone with wine as to forget all the proprieties of eastern life, and send for his queen, Vashti, to exhibit herself to the people and the princes. No one dreamed in those days of disobeying the tyrant's word, and therefore all stood aghast when Vashti, evidently a woman of right royal spirit, refused to degrade herself by being made a spectacle before that ribald rout of drinking princes, and refused to come. For her courage Vashti was divorced, and a new queen was sought for. We cannot commend Mordecai for putting his adopted daughter in competition for the monarch's choice; it was contrary to the law of God, and dangerous to her soul in the highest degree. It would have been better for Esther to have been the wife of the poorest man of the house of Israel than to have gone into the den of the Persian despot. The Scripture does not excuse, much less commend, the wrong doing of Esther and Mordecai in thus acting, but simply tells us how divine wisdom brought good out of evil, even as the chemist distils healing drugs from poisonous plants. The high position of Esther, though gained contrary to the wisest of laws, was overruled for the best interests of her people. Esther in the king's house was the means of defeating the malicious adversary. But Esther alone would not suffice; she is shut up in the harem, surrounded by her chamberlains and her maids of honour, but quite secluded from the

outside world. A watchman is needed outside the palace to guard the people of the Lord, and to urge Esther to action when help is wanted. Mordecai, her cousin and foster-father obtained an office which placed him at the palace gate. Where could he be better posted? He is where much of the royal business will come under his eye, and he is both quick, courageous, and unflinching: never had Israel a better sentinel than Mordecai, the son of Kish, a Benjamite—a very different man from that other son of Kish, who had suffered Amalek to escape in former times. His relationship to the queen allowed him to communicate with her through Hatach, her chamberlain, and, when Haman's evil decree was published, it was not long before intelligence of it reached her ear, and she felt the danger to which Mordecai and all her people were exposed. By singular providences did the Lord place those two most efficient instruments in their places. Mordecai would have been of little use without Esther, and Esther could have rendered no aid had it not been for Mordecai. Meanwhile, there is a conspiracy hatched against the king, which Mordecai discovers, and communicates to the highest authority, and so puts the king under obligation to him, which was a needful part of the Lord's plan.

Now, brethren, whatever mischief may be brewing against the cause of God and truth, and I dare say there is very much going on at this moment, for neither the devil, nor the Jesuits, nor the atheists are long quiet, this we are sure of, the Lord knows all about it, and he has his Esther and his Mordecai ready at their posts to frustrate their designs. The Lord has his men well placed, and his ambushes hidden in their coverts, to surprise his foes. We need never be afraid but what the Lord has forestalled his enemies, and provided against their mischief.

Every child of God is where God has placed him for some purpose, and the practical use of this first point is to lead you to inquire for what practical purpose has God placed each one of you where you now are? You have been wishing for another position where you could do something for Jesus: do not wish anything of the kind, but serve him where you are. If you are sitting at the King's gate there is something for you to do there, and if you were on the queen's throne, there would be something for you to do there; do not ask either to be gatekeeper or queen, but whichever you are, serve God therein. Brother, are you rich? God has made you a steward, take care that you are a good steward. Brother, are you poor? God has thrown you into a position where you will be the better able to give a word of sympathy to poor saints. Are you doing your allotted work? Do you live in a godly family? God has a motive for placing you in so happy a position. Are you in an ungodly house? You are a lamp hung up in a dark place; mind you shine there. Esther did well, because she acted as an Esther should, and Mordecai did well, because he acted as a Mordecai should. I like to think, as I look over you all,—God has put each one of them in the right place, even as a good captain well arranges the different parts of his army, and though we do not know his plan of battle, it will be seen during the conflict that he has placed each soldier where he should be. Our wisdom is not to desire another

place, nor to judge those who are in another position, but each one being redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus, should consecrate himself fully to the Lord, and say, "Lord, what would thou have *me* to do, for here I am, and by thy grace I am ready to do it." Forget not then the fact that God in his providence places his servants in positions where he can make use of them.

II. Secondly, the Lord not only arranges his servants, but HE RESTRAINS HIS ENEMIES. I would call your attention particularly to the fact that Haman, having gained a decree for the destruction of all the Jews upon a certain day, was very anxious to have his cruel work done thoroughly, and therefore, being very superstitious and believing in astrology, he bade his magicians cast lots that he might find a lucky day for his great undertaking. The lots were cast for the various months, but not a single fortunate day could be found till hard by the close of the year, and then the chosen day was the thirteenth of the twelfth month. On that day the magicians told their dupe that the heavens would be propitious, and the star of Haman would be in the ascendant. Truly the lot was cast into the lap, but the disposal of it was of the Lord. See ye not that there were eleven clear months left before the Jews would be put to death, and that would give Mordecai and Esther time to turn round, and if anything could be done to reverse the cruel decree they had space to do it in. Suppose that the lot had fallen on the second or third month, the swift dromedaries and camels and messengers would scarcely have been able to reach the extremity of the Persian dominions, certainly a second set of messengers to counteract the decree could not have done so, and, humanly speaking, the Jews must have been destroyed; but oh, in that secret council chamber where sit the sorcerers and the man who asks counsel at the hands of the infernal powers, the Lord himself is present, frustrating the tokens of the liars and making diviners mad. Vain were their enchantments and the multitude of their sorceries; the astrologers, the star-gazers, and the monthly prognosticators were all fools together, and led the superstitious Haman to destruction. "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel." Trust ye in the Lord ye righteous, and in patience possess your souls. Leave your adversaries in the hands of God, for he can make them fall into the snare which they have privily laid for you.

Notice attentively that Haman selected a mode of destroying the Jews which was wonderfully overruled for their preservation. They were to be slain by any of the people among whom they lived who chose to do so, and their plunder was to reward their slayers. Now, this was a very cunning device, for greed would naturally incite the baser sort of men to murder the thrifty Jews, and no doubt there were debtors who would also be glad to see their creditors disposed of: but see the loophole for escape which this afforded! If the decree had enacted that the Jews should be slain by the soldiery of the Persian empire it must have been done, and it is not easy to see how they could have escaped, but, the matter being left in private hands, the subsequent decree that they might defend themselves, was a sufficient counteraction of the first edict. Thus the Lord arranged that the wisdom of Haman should turn out to be folly after all.

In another point, also, we mark the restraining hand of God: namely, that Mordecai, though he had provoked Haman to the utmost, was not put to death at once. Haman "refrained himself." Why did he do so? Proud men are usually in a mighty tiff if they consider themselves insulted, and are ready at once to take revenge; but Haman "refrained himself," until that day in which his anger burned furiously, and he set up the gallows, he smothered his passion. I marvel at this; it shows how God makes the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder he doth restrain. Mordecai must not die a violent death by Haman's hand. The enemies of the church of God, and of his people, can never do more than the Lord permits; they cannot go a hair's breadth beyond the divine license, and when they are permitted to do their worst there is always some weak point about all that they do, some extreme folly which renders their fury vain. The wicked carry about them the weapons of their own destruction, and when they rage most against the Most High, the Lord of all brings out of it good for his people and glory to himself. Judge not providence in little pieces, it is a grand mosaic, and must be seen as a whole. Say not of any one hour "This is dark,"—it may be so, but that darkness will minister to the light, even as the ebon gloom of midnight makes the stars appear the more effulgent. Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. His wisdom will undermine the mines of cunning, his skill will overtop the climbings of craft; "he taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong."

III. Next we will notice that GOD IN HIS PROVIDENCE TRIES HIS PEOPLE. You must not suppose that those who are God's servants will be screened from trial; that is no part of the design of providence. "If ye be without chastisement," says the apostle, "then are ye bastards and not sons." God's intent is to educate his people by affliction, and we must not therefore dream that an event is not providential because it is grievous, nay, ye may count it to be all the more so, for "the Lord trieth the righteous." Observe that God tried Mordecai; he was a quiet old man, I have no doubt, and it must have been a daily trial to him to stand erect, or to sit in his place when that proud peer of the realm went strutting by. His fellow servants told him that the King has commanded all men to pay homage to Haman, but he held his own, not, however, without knowing what it might cost him to be so sternly independent. Haman was an Amalekite, and the Jew would not bow before him. But what a trouble it must have been to the heart of Mordecai, when he saw the proclamation that all the Jews must die: the good man must have bitterly lamented his unhappy fate in being the innocent cause of the destruction of his nation. "Perhaps," he thought within himself, "I have been too obstinate. Woe is me; my whole house, and my whole people are to be slain because of what I have done." He put on sackcloth and cast ashes on his head, and was full of sorrow, a sorrow which we can hardly realise; for even if you know you have done right, yet if you bring down trouble, and especially destruction, upon the heads of others it cuts you to the quick. You could bear martyrdom for yourself, but it is sad to see others suffer through your firmness.

Esther also had to be tried. Amid the glitter of the Persian court she might have grown forgetful of her God, but the sad news comes to her, "Your cousin and your nation are to be destroyed." Sorrow and dread filled her heart. There was no hope for her people, unless she would go in unto the king—that despot from whom one angry look would be death; she must risk all, and go unbidden into his presence, and plead for her nation. Do you wonder that she trembled? Do you marvel that she asked the prayers of the faithful? Are you surprised to see both herself and her maids of honour fasting and lamenting before God? Do not think, my prosperous friend, that the Lord has given you a high place that you may escape the trials which belong to all his people: yours is no position of ease, but one of the hottest parts of the battle. Neither the lowest and most quiet position, nor the most public and exposed condition will enable you to escape the "much tribulation" through which the church militant must fight its way to glory. Why should we wish it? Should not the gold be tested in the crucible? Should not the strong pillar sustain great weights? When the Menai bridge was first flung across the straits the engineer did not stipulate that his tube should never be tried with great weights; on the contrary, I can imagine his saying, "Bring up your heaviest trains and load the bridge as much as ever you will, for it will bear every strain." The Lord trieth the righteous because he has made them of metal which will endure the test, and he knows that by the sustaining power of his Holy Spirit they will be held up and made more than conquerors; therefore is it a part of the operation of providence to try the saints. Let that comfort those of you who are in trouble at this time.

IV. But we must pass on to note, fourthly, that THE LORD'S WISDOM IS SEEN IN ARRANGING THE SMALLEST EVENTS SO AS TO PRODUCE GREAT RESULTS. We frequently hear persons say of a pleasant or a great event, "What a providence!" while they are silent as to anything which appears less important, or has an unpleasant savour. But, my brethren, the place of the gorse upon the heath is as fixed as the station of a king, and the dust which is raised by a chariot-wheel is as surely steered by providence as the planet in its orbit. There is as much providence in the creeping of an aphid upon a rose leaf as in the marching of an army to ravage a continent. Everything, the most minute as well as the most magnificent, is ordered by the Lord who has prepared his throne in the heavens, whose kingdom ruleth over all. The history before us furnishes proof of this.

We have reached the point where Esther is to go in unto the king and plead for her people. Strengthened by prayer, but doubtless trembling still, Esther entered the inner court, and the king's affection led him instantly to stretch out the golden sceptre. Being told to ask what she pleases, she invites the king to come to a banquet, and bring Haman with him. He comes, and for the second time invites her to ask what she wills to the half of his kingdom. Why, when the king was in so kind a spirit, did not Esther speak? He was charmed with her beauty, and his royal word was given to deny her nothing, why not speak out? But no, she merely asks that he and Haman will come to another banquet of wine to-morrow. O, daughter of Abraham, what an

opportunity hast thou lost! Wherefore didst thou not plead for thy people? Their very existence hangs upon thy entreaty, and the king has said, "What wilt thou?" and yet thou art backward! Was it timidity? It is possible. Did she think that Haman stood too high in the king's favour for her to prevail? It would be hard to say. Some of us are very unaccountable, but on that woman's unaccountable silence far more was hanging than appears at first sight. Doubtless she longed to bring out her secret, but the words came not. God was in it; it was not the right time to speak, and therefore she was led to put off her disclosure. I dare say she regretted it, and wondered when she should be able to come to the point, but the Lord knew best. After that banquet Haman went out joyfully at the palace gate, but being mortified beyond measure by Mordecai's unbending posture, he called for his wife and his friends, and told them that his riches and honours availed him nothing so long as Mordecai, the Jew, sat in the king's gate. They might have told him, "You will destroy Mordecai and all his people in a few months, and the man is already fretting himself over the decree; let him live, and be you content to watch his miseries and gloat over his despair!" But no, they counsel speedy revenge. Let Mordecai be hanged on a gibbet on the top of the house, and let the gallows be set up at once, and let Haman early in the morning ask for the Jew's life, and let his insolence be punished. Go, call the workmen, and let the gallows be set up at a great height that very night. It seemed a small matter that Haman should be so enraged just at that hour, but it was a very important item in the whole transaction, for had he not been so hasty he would not have gone so early in the morning to the palace, and would not have been at hand when the king said, "Who is in the court?"

But what has happened? Why, that very night, when Haman was devising to hang up Mordecai, the king could not sleep. What caused the monarch's restlessness? Why happened it on that night of all others? Ahasuerus is master of one hundred and twenty and seven provinces, but not master of ten minutes' sleep. What shall he do? Shall he call for soothing instruments of music, or beguile the hours with a tale that is told, or with a merry ballad of the minstrel? No, he calls for a book. Who would have thought that this luxurious prince must listen to a reader at dead of night. "Bring a book!" What book? A volume perfumed with roses, musical with songs, sweet as the notes of the nightingale? "No, bring the chronicles of the empire." Dull reading, that! But there are one hundred and twenty seven provinces,—which volume shall the page bring from the recorder's shelves? He chose the record of Shushan the royal city. That is the centre of the empire, and its record is lengthy, in which section shall the reader make a beginning? He may begin where he pleases, but ere he closes the book the story of the discovery of a conspiracy by Mordecai has been read in the king's hearing. Was not this a singular accident? Singular if you like, but no accident. Out of ten thousand other records the reader pitches upon that one of all others. The Jews tell us that he began at another place, but that the book closed and fell open at the chapter upon Mordecai. Be that as it may, this is certain, that the Lord knew where the record

was, and guided the reader to the right page. Speaking after the manner of men, there were a million chances against one that the king of Persia should, in the dead of the night, be reading the chronicle of his own kingdom, and that he should light upon this particular part of it. But that was not all, the king is interested, he had desired to go to sleep, but that wish is gone, and he is in haste to act. He says, "This man Mordecai has done me good service, has he been rewarded?" "No." Then cries the impulsive monarch, "He shall be rewarded at once. Who is in the court?" It was the most unlikely thing in the world for the luxurious Ahasuerus to be in haste to do justice, for he had done injustice thousands of times without remorse, and chiefly on that day when he wantonly signed the death warrant of that very Mordecai and his people. For once, the king is intent on being just, and at the door stands Haman,—but you know the rest of the story, and how he had to lead Mordecai in state through the streets. It seems a very small matter whether you or I shall sleep to-night or toss restlessly on our beds, but God will be in our rest or in our wakefulness; we know not what his purpose may be, but his hand will be in it, neither doth any man sleep or wake but according to the decree of the Lord.

Observe well how this matter prepared the way for the queen at the next banquet; for when she unfolded her sorrow and told of the threatened destruction of the Jews, and pointed to that wicked Haman, the king must have been the more interested and ready to grant her request, from the fact that the man who had saved his life was a Jew, and that he had already awarded the highest honours to a man in every way fitted to supersede his worthless favourite. All was well, the plotter was unmasked, the gibbet ready, and he who ordered it was made to try his own arrangements.

V. Our next remark is THE LORD IN HIS PROVIDENCE CALLS HIS OWN SERVANTS TO BE ACTIVE. This business was done, and well done, by divine providence, but those concerned had to pray about it. Mordecai and all the Jews outside in Shushan fasted, and cried unto the Lord. Unbelievers inquire, "What difference could prayer make?" My brethren, prayer is an essential part of the providence of God, so essential, that you will always find that when God delivers his people, his people have been praying for that deliverance. They tell us that prayer does not affect the Most High, and cannot alter his purposes. We never thought it did; but prayer is a part of the purpose and plan, and a most effective wheel in the machinery of providence. The Lord sets his people praying, and then he blesses them. Moreover, Mordecai was quite sure the Lord would deliver his people, and he expressed that confidence, but he did not therefore sit still: he stirred up Esther, and when she seemed a little slack, he put it very strongly, "If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then enlargement and deliverance will arise from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed." Nerved by this message, Esther braced herself to the effort. She did not sit still and say, "The Lord will arrange this business, there is nothing for me to do," but she both pleaded with God, and ventured her life and her all for her people's sake, and then acted very wisely and discreetly in her interviews with the

king. So, my brethren, we rest confidently in providence, but we are not idle. We believe that God has an elect people, and therefore do we preach in the hope that we may be the means, in the hands of his Spirit, of bringing this elect people to Christ. We believe that God has appointed for his people both holiness here and heaven hereafter; therefore do we strive against sin, and press forward to the rest which remaineth for the people of God. Faith in God's providence, instead of repressing our energies, excites us to diligence. We labour as if all depended upon us, and then fall back upon the Lord with the calm faith which knows that all depends upon him.

VI. Now must we close our historical review with the remark that in the end THE LORD ACHIEVES THE TOTAL DEFEAT OF HIS FOES AND THE SAFETY OF HIS PEOPLE. Never was a man so utterly defeated as Haman, never was a project so altogether turned aside. He was taken in his own trap, and he and his sons were hanged up on the gibbet set up for Mordecai. As for the Jews, they were in this special danger, that they were to be destroyed on a certain day, and though Esther pleaded with the king for their lives, he was not able to alter his decree, though willing to do so, for it was a rule of the constitution that the law of the Medes and Persians altered not. The king might determine what he pleased, but when he had once decreed it he could not change it, the people feeling it better to submit to the worst established law than to be left utterly to every capricious whim of their master. Now, what was to be done? The decree was given that the Jews might be slain, and it could not be reversed. Here was the door of escape,—another decree was issued giving the Jews permission to defend themselves, and take the property of any who dared to attack them; thus one decree effectually neutralized the other. With great haste this mandate was sent all over the kingdom, and on the appointed day the Jews stood up for themselves and slew their foes. According to their tradition nobody attempted to attack them except the Amalekites, and consequently only Amalekites were slain, and the race of Amalek was on that day swept from off the face of the earth. God thus gave to the Jews a high position in the empire and we are told that many became Jews, or were proselytes to the God of Abraham, because they saw what God had done. As I commenced by saying that God sometimes darted flashes of light through the thick darkness, you will now see what a flash this must have been. All the people were perplexed when they found that the Hebrews might be put to death, but they must have been far more astonished when the decree came that they might defend themselves. All the world enquired "Why is this?" and the answer was "The living God whom the Jews worship, has displayed his wisdom and rescued his people." All nations were compelled to feel that there was a God in Israel, and thus the divine purpose was fully accomplished, his people were secured, and his name was glorified to the world's end.

From the whole we learn the following lessons.

First, it is clear that *the divine will is accomplished, and yet men are perfectly free agents*. Haman acted according to his own will, Ahasuerus did whatever he pleased, Mordecai behaved as his heart moved him, and so did Esther. We see no interference with them, no force or

coercion; hence the entire sin and responsibility rest with each guilty one, yet, acting with perfect freedom, none of them acts otherwise than divine providence had foreseen. "I cannot understand it," says one. My dear friend, I am compelled to say the same,—I do not understand it either. I have known many who think they comprehend all things, but I fancy they had a higher opinion of themselves than truth would endorse. Certain of my brethren deny free agency, and so get out of the difficulty; others assert that there is no predestination, and so cut the knot. As I do not wish to get out of the difficulty, and have no wish to shut my eyes to any part of the truth, I believe both free agency and predestination to be facts. How they can be made to agree I do not know, or care to know; I am satisfied to know anything which God chooses to reveal to me, and equally content not to know what he does not reveal. There it is; man is a free agent in what he does, responsible for his actions, and verily guilty when he does wrong, and he will be justly punished too, and if he be lost the blame will rest with himself alone: but yet there is One who ruleth over all, who, without complicity in their sin, makes even the actions of wicked men to subserve his holy and righteous purposes. Believe these two truths and you will see them in practical agreement in daily life, though you will not be able to devise a theory for harmonising them on paper.

Next, we learn *what wonders can be wrought without miracles*. When God does a wonderful thing by suspending the laws of nature men are greatly astonished and say, "This is the finger of God", but now-a-days they say to us, "Where is your God? He never suspends his laws now!" Now, I see God in the history Pharaoh, but I must confess I see him quite as clearly in the history of Haman, and I think I see him in even a grander light; for (I say it with reverence to his holy name) it is a somewhat rough method of accomplishing a purpose to stop the wheel of nature and reverse wise and admirable laws; certainly it reveals his power, but it does not so clearly display his immutability. When, however, the Lord allows everything to go on in the usual way, and gives mind and thought, ambition, and passion their full liberty, and yet achieves his purpose, it is doubly wonderful. In the miracles of Pharaoh we see the finger of God, but in the wonders of providence, without miracle, we see the hand of God. To-day, whatever the event may be, whether it be the war between the Germans and the French, or the march into Coomassie, or the change of our own government, the attentive eye will as clearly see the Lord as if by miraculous power the hills had leaped from their places, or the floods had stood upright as an heap. I am sure that God is in the world, ay, and is at my own fireside, and in my chamber, and manages my affairs, and orders all things for me, and for each one of his children. We want no miracles to convince us of his working, the wonders of his providence are as great marvels as miracles themselves.

Next we learn *how safe the church of God is*. At one time the people of God seemed to be altogether in Haman's power. Nero once said that he wished his enemies had but one neck that he might destroy them all at a blow, and Haman seemed to have realised just such power.

Yet the chosen nation was delivered, the Jewish people lived on until the Messiah came, and does exist, and will exist till they shall enjoy the bright future which is decreed for them. So is it with the church of God to-day. The foes of truth can never put out the candle which God has lit, never crush the living seed which the Lord Jesus has sown in his own blood-bought people. Brethren, be ye not afraid, but stablish your hearts in God.

Again, we see that *the wicked will surely come to an ill end*. They may be very powerful, but God will bring them down. They may be very crafty, and may plot and plan, and may think that even God himself is their accomplice, because everything goes as they desire; but they may be sure their sin will find them out. They may dig deep as hell, but God will undermine them, and they may climb as high as the stars, but God will be above them to hurl them down. Wicked man, I charge you if you be wise, turn you from your career of opposition to the Most High, you cannot stand against him, neither can you outwit him. Cease, I beseech you, from this idle opposition, and hear the voice of his gospel which says, "Confess your sin and forsake it. Believe in Jesus, the Son of God, the great atoning sacrifice, and even you shall yet be saved." If you do not so, upon your own head shall your iniquities fall.

Last of all, let each child of God rejoice that *we have a guardian so near the throne*. Every Jew in Shushan must have felt hope when he remembered that the queen was a Jewess. To-day let us be glad that Jesus is exalted.

"He is at the Father's side,
The Man of love, the crucified."

How safe are all his people, for "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." There is one that lieth in the bosom of God who will plead for all those who put their trust in him. Therefore be ye not dismayed, but let your souls rest in God, and wait patiently for him, for sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than those who trust the Lord shall perish. "They shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end." Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Esther v. 9—14; vi., vii.

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HOLY WATER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 8TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into lasting life."—John iv. 14.

All things that are of earth are unsatisfactory. Our spirit craveth something more than time and sense can yield it. Nothing which is of earth, even if it should yield a transient satisfaction, can long maintain its excellency. Pointing to the water in Jacob's well, the Lord said, "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again;" therein he took up his parable against all earthly things, whether they be fame, or riches, or fleshly pleasure, or aught else beneath the sun. He that drinketh at these shallow wells shall not quench his thirst, or if for a time he imagines that he has so done, he will be deceived, and in a little season the old craving will return. That which is born of the flesh is flesh even at its best, and all flesh is corrupt, and the goodness thereof is as the flower of grass; the grass withereth and the flower thereof fadeth away, and in like manner perisheth the flesh and its glory. The religion of the flesh shares in the common fate, if it has a man's own self for its author, his own energy for its impulse, and his own opinions for its creed, it may for a little while flourish like the flower of the field, but the wind passeth over it and it is gone. Waters from his own cistern may stay a man's desires for a season, but ere long he must thirst again. Nothing can abide for ever but that which comes from the Eternal One. Not from the will of man, but from the work of the Holy Ghost, all truly satisfying religion must proceed. It is the prerogative of the gospel of Christ thoroughly to satisfy the soul of man, and to do this abidingly: the chief object of our present discourse is to set forth that most admirable fact.

[Finding that it greatly helps the memory of the hearer if the preacher keeps to the words of the text, I shall do so, and note first what we have here before us THE WAY OF OBTAINING TRUE RELIGION.

No. 1,202.

"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." It is clear from this that *true religion must come to us as a gift*. The water that I shall give him, says Christ. There is no suggestion as to digging deep with much learning into the bowels of mysterious truth to find the water for ourselves; this priceless draught is freely handed out to us by our Redeemer, without our bringing either bucket or line. There is no hint in the text that we are to purchase the life-giving water; it is presented to us without money and without price. There is no allusion to a certain measure of fitness to qualify us for the draught, it is purely a gift to be received by us here and now. Our Lord Jesus told the woman that had she known the gift of God she would have asked and he would have given. Sinner as she was, she had only to ask and have. There is no other way of obtaining eternal life but as the free gift of sovereign grace. The divine life is not in us by nature, it cannot be produced in us by culture, nor infused into us by ceremonies, nor propagated in us by natural descent, it must come as a boon of infinite charity from heaven, unpurchased, undeserved. Wisdom cannot impart it, power cannot fashion it, money cannot buy it, merit cannot procure it, grace alone can give it. If men desire wages they may earn them beneath the mastership of sin, for "The wages of sin is death." On the side of God all is of grace, for "the gift of God is eternal life." Whoever, then, is to be saved must be saved by the boundless charity of God, in other words by the free gift of the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord. This is an elementary truth of the gospel, but it needs to be told out in every sermon, for man is so hostile to it, and the natural mind so runs upon merit, and its own boasted doings, that man will not understand the doctrine of salvation by grace though it is as plain as the sun at noonday.

Observe next that *true religion is a gift from Jesus*. Our Lord says, "the water that I shall give him." The only true religion in the world is that which comes from Jesus Christ, and the only realisation of that true religion in your own soul is by receiving it from the hand of Christ; for it is in all its details connected with him. Do we want peace of conscience because sin is forgiven? We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. Do we desire deliverance from the power of sin within us? We can only overcome by the blood of the Lamb. Do we need teaching? The best instruction comes from his lips. Do we desire an example which will inspire us to obey the teaching? He is our pattern, yea, "he is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." He is our all in all. If any man dreams that he has a God-given religion, he is in deadly error if there be not the mark of the pierced hand upon it. That peace which does not come to us sealed with the blood of the Mediator's sacrifice is a false peace. Your soul is deceived with the semblance of satisfaction, but its thirst will soon be upon you again, like an armed man, unless you have been drinking from the fountain opened upon Calvary. Drink from the cup which Jesus fills, think not that satisfying waters can be drawn from any well but himself.

True godliness is next described in the text as *a gift which must be received*. "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him." It is received, you see, not merely into the hand, but into the in-

rd parts. When we drink water it enters into us, saturates us, comes a part of our being, and helps to build up the fabric of our life: even so we must receive Jesus Christ into our innermost self, professing to believe with the creed of the head, while the heart remains in unbelief; not paying to our Lord the empty compliment of praising his character while we reject his mission; but so trusting in, depending upon him, loving him, following him, yielding ourselves to him, living upon him, living in him, that it may be clear that he has entered into and become one with us for ever. We need Christ in us,—Christ in the secret fountain of our being. The Holy Spirit must create in us a new heart and a right spirit, and then dwell in our renewed nature as a king in his palace. My brethren, be ye sure that this is so with you; be not content with the outward name, which is but more a part of yourself than if it were a label hung about your neck: be not satisfied with mere externals which do not enter into the heart; never rest till ye have the divine life within. We need not the faith which prates and talks, but the faith which eats the flesh of the Son of Man and drinks his blood. What we want is not Jesus Christ pictured on the wall, nor his name on the lip, nor words about him from pious books; we want the Lord himself received into our heart—"Christ in you the hope of glory." Oh for Christ living, dwelling, reigning within our entire nature, looking out from our eyes, speaking by our lips, blessing the poor by our hands, being about doing good with these feet, and magnifying God in these mortal bodies as once he did on earth in his own body. This, then, is the religion,—Jesus Christ received by an act of faith into our innermost soul. Dear friend, have you got this? Before we go an inch farther let every man and woman among us press this question home. Do I know what it is to drink of the life-giving stream which Jesus Christ bestows?

II. We notice in the second place THE SATISFYING POWER OF TRUE RELIGION. We are told in the text, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." *Grace relieves our soul-thirst as soon as it is received.* In Eastern countries the idea of thirst is much more vivid than it is with us. Owing to the great heat and the dryness of the atmosphere, and the frequency with which thirst really happens to men, they feel it to be one of the severest physical sufferings. To the Oriental thirst would be a forcible metaphor of the longing of an awakened soul, let it be so to us. A man once startled from the sleep of sinful indifference so as to look about him, and to ask what he is, and where he is, and whither he is going, finds in his spirit an eager craving; he scarce knows what it is, nor what will satisfy it, but urged onward by an insatiable sense of need, he searches after a something which will fill what Dr. Watts has very aptly called the "aching void" within him. He tries the virtue of riches, but gold and silver cannot fill a soul: he seeks after knowledge, and it is no mean pursuit, but science has no well from which a weary spirit may be refreshed: "Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh." It may be he dazzles his fancy with fame, or charms his eye with beauty, and his ear with music; but "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, thus saith the preacher,"

and the preacher's verdict finds a thousand echoes in experience. There is a horseleech in human nature which continually crieth, "Give, give;" and had it all the stars for a possession, it would still cry for more, for like the sea it cannot be quiet. Man, though he knows it not, wants his God, he needs reconciliation to his offended Maker, and until he gets it he cannot rest; he is like "a rolling thing before the whirlwind," he is tossed up and down like a thistle-down in the breeze, and like Noah's dove, he finds no rest for the sole of his foot. He who believes in Christ has received the atonement, and finds in it an at-one-ment with God; the great quarrel is ended; his nature is also changed, and now he seeks after that which God delights in, and in the Lord his soul is satisfied. He has the new birth, he belongs to the family of God; he begins to understand divine realities, and to see them, taste them, handle them, and to find rest for his soul in them. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Faith in Jesus quenches our souls' thirst, and *it continues to do so*. This is the beauty of it. He that drinketh of the water from earth's wells is refreshed, but after a little time the effect of his drinking is gone, and he thirsts again; but he that drinketh of the water that Christ shall give him, shall never thirst. That one draught has created in him an inexhaustible fountain of supply, which will satisfy his mouth with good things, so that his youth shall be renewed like the eagle's. Though the thirst will for ever strive to return, yet shall it be always met by the well within, which shall spring up into everlasting life. Accept the gospel of Christ, poor thirsty heart, and you have accepted a satisfaction which will endure as long as you endure. Glory be to God that we have such living water to present to you in Jesus Christ's name this morning.

Here is the secret cause of this abiding satisfaction—it continues because the grace continues. Our Lord adds, "The water that I shall give him *shall be in him*." The water drank to-day has its uses and is gone; it serves our present purpose and disappears; but he that drinks of the water which Jesus gives, has it always in him, and hence he enjoys always a freedom from spiritual thirst. Whatever effect the grace of God produces to-day, it will be capable of producing the same to-morrow, and other effects as they shall be required, for it retains its potency, and the same cause will produce the same effect. O matchless draught, which never leaves the man who drinks it, but remains in him, as part and parcel of his noblest self, for ever contenting his whole nature, and causing rivers of living water to flow out of him, even the Spirit which those who believe in Jesus have received. Well may every instructed heart pray, "Lord, give us of this water."

Now this final and abiding removal of thirst by a draught of grace, which remains in the man, *is a matchless blessing, and averts a thousand ills*. It is often useful to measure our mercies by their negative aspect, asking ourselves, What should we have been without them? O sinner, without the living water, thou art thirsting now, or or if not thirsting, a deadly stupor is upon thy soul, which is worse than thirst. How mournful is thy condition! And yet, my brother in the Lord, thou hadst been in a like pitiable case hadst thou not believed;

thou hadst been cast into the same lethargic sleep with which sin steepens the senses of thy fellow-man ; or hadst thou been awakened out of that sleep, thou hadst been in bondage to fears, and dreads and horrors innumerable. Now would sin have been as a burning fever to thy nature, and all the joys of earth a mockery to thine anguish. Now wouldst thou have been crushed beneath an awful sense of present wrath, and a deadly fear of coming judgment ; perhaps also at this time thou hadst been going from bad to worse, trying to satisfy thy cravings with the illusions of Satan, poisoning thy heart by drinking down what seemed to be water, but turned out to be liquid fire, inflaming thy passions with intoxicating vices, and preparing in thy heart a flame which shall burn even to the lowest hell. Thy fleshly lusts might at *this* hour have been steeling thy spirit more and more with a dreadful hate of God, and proud disdain of his gospel. Ah, perhaps at this moment thou wouldst have been in hell, where thirst rages both in body and in soul forever, and not a drop of water can be found to allay the torment. But now thou hast drunk of what Jesus Christ has given thee, and thou art satisfied, and at peace. Blessed be the Lord for this. The ills averted and the good bestowed thou canst not sufficiently calculate, but thou canst to-day adore that dear hand which bestowed this matchless blessing upon thee.

I think I hear some one interpose the observation that there is still the believer a thirst. I answer, yes, it is true, and blessed be God for it. We sang right well in our hymn just now—

“ I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share ;
Thy wounds, Immanuel, all forbid
That I should find my pleasure there.”

At the moment a man knows Christ he thirsts to know more of him ; but there is a very great difference between the thirsting of horrible, unappeased longings, and the thirsting of unutterable joy which longs to continue, and of burning love which fain would know more and more of its adorable Lord. The inward desires of the Christian after more holiness, more communion with God, and more love to Christ, are not so much a thirst for grace as the bubblings up of the well of spiritual life which is in the soul already. I would not wish to be in such a state as to be satisfied with myself, or satisfied with my attainments. Satisfied with Christ the Christian always is, but altogether and tirelessly satisfied with his own realisation of the blessings which Jesus brings, so as to desire no more, I think he never will be till he gets to heaven. Have you never heard of that great painter who one day taking his palette, and putting aside his brush, said to a friend that he could paint no more, for his day was over ; and when his friend inquired why he had come to that singular conclusion, he said, “ Because the last painting which I executed perfectly contented me, and therefore I feel that the high ideal which led me on has departed and I shall succeed no more.” It is so. There is in every man who is a master of his art a high ideal after which he strains, and the fact that he has set an ideal ever above him is one of the tokens of his lofty genius. I suppose that Milton as a poet never reached the “height of

that great argument" as he desired to reach it: when he had composed a portion of his wondrous epic he would feel that his thoughts were above his words, and that he had an inner unshaped conception towering higher than his actually formed and shapen thoughts. He was a poet because that was the case, and other rhymesters are not poets because their verses please them. That man is holy who mourns the unholiness of his holiest deeds, and that man is no longer holy who conceives himself to be without sin and to have reached the highest attainable excellence. The mariner who has reached the Ultima Thule, and dreams that he has cast anchor hard by earth's utmost bound where the universe comes to an end, will never be a Columbus. Up with your anchor, my brother, for there are wide seas beyond, and a land of gold across the main. Self-satisfaction is the grave of progress; he who thinks himself perfect is never likely to be so. Brethren, shun the spirit of self-content. Whatever doctrinal views you may hold as to the higher life, I will not dispute with you, but practically I beseech you to shun the spirit which lulls the heart into soft slumbers by the music of spiritual flattery. Whoever you are, I make bold to say that you are not all you should be, nor all you can be. There is a blessed hungering and thirsting after righteousness, a panting after God as the hart panteth after the water brooks, which still abides in the Christian, but it is in no degree akin to the thirst which is mentioned in the text. Grace in the heart gives rest, peace, joy, and holy calm of soul; it satisfies our cravings and fills our largest desires, and all because by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit it daily enables us to realise Jesus and God in Jesus. What fulness there is in him:—

"In want, my plentiful supply;
In weakness, my almighty power;
In bonds, my perfect liberty;
My refuge in temptation's hour;
My comfort 'midst all grief and thrall,
My life in death, my all in all."

III. Having noticed the way of obtaining true religion, and the satisfying effect of it, we will now observe ITS ABIDING CHARACTER. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." There is a theory of religion which supposes that a man may be regenerated, and yet may so depart from the Lord that the inner life may become extinct, and I have met with persons of whom I have been told that they have been born again three or four times,—that after experiencing regeneration they had fallen from grace altogether, and yet had been renewed again unto repentance. I must confess I have not believed what I have been told, for it is contrary to those many scriptures which declare that "if these shall fall away it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance," for "if the salt have lost its savour wherewith shall it be seasoned." My heart believes, and as I read the Scriptures I believe it more and more, that where a good work is begun by God, he will carry it on, and that the new life bestowed upon us is an incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever, so that "the righteous shall hold on his way and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." Notice how the text describes the matter. "The water that I shall

give him *shall be in him*;—not of him, not upon him, not around him, but *in* him, and hence it cannot be lost. You know how we use that expression. Here is a man trying to write poetry; (Ah, how many are guilty of that folly) but it is not *in him*, and it cannot come out of him; so he rhymes his nonsense, but a poet he never becomes; but if a man has it in him who can take it away? Another sits down to paint; but if it is not in him he becomes eminent in the school of Van Dyck, but reaches no further, it is not in him; but if in him who shall deprive him of the gift? True religion is, however, more than a faculty, it is a new life, and so is even more abidingly in the man than my illustration sets forth. The poet may be despoiled of his goods, he may be deprived of his liberty, he may be shut up within iron bars, but he sings still; you cannot rob him of his poetic faculty, for it is in him. The artist may scarce be allowed a ray of light in the dark dungeon into which he is thrust, but he follows the lone sunbeam around his prison wall, and works by its light, for his art is in him. We all agree with the remark that it is better to give a lad an education than a fortune, for the one he carries in him and cannot lose, but the other may soon be gone, since it is no part of himself. That part of our inheritance which we carry in us is beyond the thief's cunning and the tyrant's power. If we have the grace of God we shall have it still, for Jesus says—“it shall be in him.” Blessed be God it is not in our frail body nor in our feeble mind, but in our heaven-born spirit, and so it is in that part of our nature which death itself cannot cause to die, which no power on earth is able to touch. If religion were a garb it could be laid aside; if it were a rite its efficacy might cease; but since it is a life, a vital principle, an essential part of our new nature, and is interwoven with the warp and woof of our renewed manhood, it is ours eternally. Christ has said it, and we believe it, “The water that I shall give him shall be in him,” and in us it shall be as long as we live.

Our Lord also promises that this water shall be in the man “*a well of living water*.” It shall always remain in him as an operative force, full of freshness and life. It shall not be there like water in a cistern, which may gradually evaporate, and cannot have the freshness of spring water; nor as a stagnant pool which becomes useless and even pestilential to all around. It shall not even be as water forced into our houses by pressure, it shall have an upspringing power of its own. It shall be as permanent and changeless as Jacob's well which was there in the patriarch's day, and is there still as full as ever; it shall be ever new, yet ever the same; it shall have an energy and force in it which shall cause a perpetual uprising in the soul. Like the village brook born at the spring-head our new life shall flow on, and as it flows it shall sing,

“Men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.”

As surely as the well continues to fill itself without machinery of man's invention, or force-pump of earthly power, so surely shall the new life within the Christian continue to stir and move and bubble up. There will always be in it a vitality which comes from the quickening Spirit. Mechanical religion, which consists in ceremonies and observances,

is a very stale thing. I should think after seeing the mass, or any other Popish display some fifty times, it must become rather a dreary business, however prettily the show may be arranged; and the mere repetition of a liturgical service, without heart, with the same words and tones, must become very monotonous; certainly extempore prayer and the most varied service is heavy enough when the soul is taken out of it. Anything which has not spiritual life in it, becomes in due time insipid, flat, wearisome. As well be a blind horse going round in a mill as the performer of religious acts without the inner life. Coming to this place, and sitting in these seats, and listening to me may soon become a piece of mere clockwork to you if your hearts are not alive towards God. How very different is worship, in spirit and in truth. Real inward vitality is as perpetually beautiful as the sea, which never appears to be twice alike, though it is ever the same; or like the rising of the sun, a perpetual novelty, for ever exhibiting some new phase of glory. It is a joy to me to linger near a spring, and mark the widening circles, the countless wavelets, the sparkling ripples, and the translucent streams, which in their perpetual variety and laughing joyousness are the very image of youth and freshness.

True religion is like a well, because it is independent of its surroundings, in summer and in winter does it flow. The pond overflows because there has been a shower of rain, but the deep well is full in the drought, and the villagers flock to it in the driest season, for they never knew it fail. Its secret sources are too abundant to be affected by a few weeks of parching heat. Would you go in search of them, they are far away on yonder cloud-capped hills, where the river of God which is full of water, empties itself into reservoirs which the Lord has digged. "I will look unto the hills from whence cometh my help," saith the Christian. He directs his expectations to the all-sufficiency of God, and sings, "All my fresh springs are in thee." He knows that it is the Lord who "sendeth the springs into the valleys which run among the hills." The believer is independent of his outward surroundings, he is not exalted by riches, nor crushed by poverty; he trusts not in man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of. Nothing earthly can feed or famish the divine life in man, and even the visible means of grace are not absolutely needful to it, for concerning them it may be said, "man shall not live by bread alone." Should a Christian be cast into a heathen land, or called to live where truth has fallen in the streets, and zeal is dead, and corruption abounds, he is greatly tried, but still the inner well springs up, because his faith has tapped "the deep which lieth under," and he draws his supplies from the infinity of God and not from outward ordinances. Elijah is strong amid idolators, Paul's faith is vigorous on board ship among heathen, just as wells are found in places where all around is arid as a desert. Elim was in the wilderness, not in the king's garden, and many a believer is found in a dry and thirsty land where no water is. God is infinite, and all-sufficient, and the man whose sources lie in the All-sufficient One receives of his fulness; and when natural religion and fleshly excitement are gone, the faith, and hope, and joy of vital godliness, manifest the dew of their youth. Alas, how often is

the contrast seen! Do I not know some who were converted under a very earnest preacher, and as long as they heard him they remained in their apparent godliness, but when he was gone what became of them? I enquired the other day as to the permanent results of a certain revival, which at the time I hoped was a genuine one: some two or three hundred were added to a certain church, but the pastor left, and I asked his successor whether the converts remained, and he replied, "I cannot give a good account of them. Very few are with us now." That is not a rare case, I have other instances within my knowledge where churches have been revived into absolute annihilation. The balloon has been filled till it burst. Warmed up into a furnace heat by tremendous blasts of excitement, a cold of corresponding intensity has set in when the heating apparatus has consumed its fuel. Not a word have I to say against real spiritual revivals, but I warn you excitable people that *principle* is the main matter, not passion. Give me a man who does not depend upon a preacher, nor drink in his inspiration from warm-hearted friends, and crowded meetings, but has inward, vital experience by which he knows the Lord for himself, and has had personal dealings with a personal Saviour. Such a man will follow the Lamb though every preacher should die, and every outward ministry should be struck dumb at once. The indwelling power of the Holy Spirit rises superior to all disadvantages, like a spring which cannot be kept under, do what you may. Our engineers and builders know how hard it is to bind up the earth-floods from overflowing, and the spiritual floods are yet more unconquerable. It is wonderful how springs will bubble up in places where we least expect them. The great desert of Sahara will no doubt be made a very easy country to traverse, and, perhaps, may even become a fertile plain, from the fact that there is water everywhere at no very great depth below the surface, and where it is reached an oasis is formed. The government of Algeria has sent engineers into parts of the Sahara bordering on the French possession, and these men have bored the rock by Artesian wells, and greatly astonished the natives, for in the wilderness have waters leaped out and streams in the desert. At the magic touch of the living water, palm trees have sprung up and an undergrowth of vegetation, so that the solitary places have been made to sing together. When the Lord gives our souls to drink from the fountains of the great deep of his own eternal love, and to have a vital principle of grace within us, our wilderness rejoices and blossoms as the rose, neither can the Sahara around us wither our verdure; our soul is as an oasis, though all around is barrenness. Happy is the man whose life is hid with Christ in God, for he shall be filled with all the fulness of God:—

"From thee the overflowing spring,
His soul shall drink a fresh supply;
While such as trust their native strength
Shall melt away and droop and die."

When God shall fail, the believer will fail, but not till then; on him rests the blessing given to Joseph, securing to him the precious things of heaven, and of the dew and of the deep which coucheth beneath.

Observers tell us, and we may have noticed ourselves, that wells

are not always equally full, for verily earthly things must change, and none of them are full types of the heavenly. Springs which are never frozen in the coldest winter, and never dry in the hottest summer, yet exhibit certain ebbs and flows, and even so the Christian, because he is still in the body, is not always at his best, by reason of infirmity and fault. There are happy times when we overflow delightfully, and there are other seasons when we have to cry most anxiously, "Spring up, O well." Yet, blessed be God, the well is always there, and as it is never disconnected from its springs, it never utterly fails. Our Lord says the well shall always be in us, and, therefore, we may exultantly cry, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Who shall destroy the life which is one with his? The notion that our Lord's spiritual body is undergoing a constant change in the loss of its members and the growth of new ones is so strange, and withal so dishonouring to him, that I must leave its defence to those who can tolerate it. I believe that no member of Christ shall be amputated from his body, and "not a bone of him shall be broken." He says, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "Because I live, ye live also." He has said moreover, "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth in me hath everlasting life." But a life which expires is not everlasting, and, therefore, we are sure that it will live on eternally. The principle implanted in us when we believe is an abiding one, for we were "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." If it be so, how can we perish? No, brethren, grace will remain in us, and the Lord will perfect that which concerneth us.

The text further says it is a well which is *springing*, a well which never ceases to flow; upon which we will not dwell, only we will say this, that God worketh hitherto, and worketh ever; and therefore the life of God in the soul is usually operative in some form or other. The great motives which set the Christian working at first are as forcible in his old age as in his youth, and his obedience to them is even more complete, therefore he ceases not from spiritual activity. His soul bubbles up in prayer, and praise, and love, and hope, and joy evermore; he must do the will of him that sent him; he cannot but work out his own salvation, for God continues to work in him to will and to do of his good pleasure. Thus all that happens to a Christian, overruled by the grace of God, tends to keep him springing up. Is he surrounded by the wicked? He feels it his duty to bear his protest the more vigorously. Is he in the midst of the righteous? He owns that in such congenial society he ought to do more for Christ. Is he poor? He feels that he had need be rich in faith to sustain his spirits. Is he rich? He knows that uncertain riches are certain temptations, and that he needs great grace both to escape the snare and bear up under the responsibility of his station. Thus even adverse things are made to help him, and even as the Nile overflows in the hot season because of the melting of the snows on the far-off mountains, so does the inner life flow all the more when we might have imagined it would be drawn dry.

The text adds, "*Springing up into everlasting life*;"—not to life

merely but to that life which is everlasting, and I for one shall never be able to attach any meaning to the word everlasting but that of lasting forever, even though it compels me to remain among those bigoted people who believe in *the never-ending duration of future punishment*. The believer lives on for ever, and grace blossoms into glory. The life of the saints on earth is of the same essence as the life of the saints in heaven; they receive no new life when they enter into glory, only that which they received in regeneration is purged from every hindrance, and is developed to perfection. Our life below tends in the same direction as the heavenly life, for both flow towards God, and seek his glory, and delight in fellowship with him. We have now within us the germs of the glorified character; a holy life, a humble life, an obedient life, a blessed life, we have ever here, and such is the life of the golden city. Our life is sustained by the same power as the life of those in heaven. "Because I live, ye shall live also," is the life of saints in heaven and saints on earth; it is guaranteed by the same covenant, and if a child of God on earth can perish, a child of God in heaven may for aught I can see. The fidelity which will keep the earth is the same fidelity which preserves us while here below, and if our life, which is hid with Christ, can fail, I know not what additional security belongs to a soul in heaven.

The whole text together gives us this full assurance, that if we have drunk of the water which Christ gives us, it cannot be extracted from us, or fail to save us; it is a living well, and must spring up into everlasting life.

The practical outcome of it all is just this. Let each one answer this question—*where did you get your religion?* Does any one reply, "I am of the religion of my father before me, and that's enough for me." Yes, that is what the old heathen chieftain said, when he had one foot in the baptismal font, and turned round to the missionary and asked where his ancestors' souls were, and when he heard that they had gone to hell he said he would not be parted from them. I see no sense in such talk. I suppose if your parents had been blind you would have put your eyes out; or if they had been lame, you would have made yourself cripple. No, dear friends, we should follow our parents so far as they followed Christ, but when they leave Jesus we must take another road! Where did you get your religion from? Is it of your own home manufacture? Is it the creature of your own power and will? Then it will come to nought. Nothing is worth having as to everlasting life if it that which comes from the hand which was nailed to the cross, and where bought our redemption, and now freely bestows it upon us.

The next question is, *what has your religion done for you?* Has it satisfied your heart? Does it bring rest to your soul? Has it quenched your thirst? Now, there are many religions in the world which do not profess to do this. When nine persons out of ten talk of what they call the Christian religion, their notion is that perhaps a man may now be safe when he is dying, perhaps he may get his sins forgiven in the last solemn article, but as to any idea of being saved now, they do not comprehend it: their religion does not deal with *present* salvation. How few rejoice in that text, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know

that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." How few can say "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." They think it presumption, for they are ignorant of the power of faith. Go to Jesus Christ then, dear friends, and receive from him the free gift of his mercy, and you will say "Lord, it is enough, my soul is satisfied."

The next question is this: *Does your religion abide with you?* You had great joy in it once? Do you possess it now? Is it in you? That religion which you *can* lose it might be well to lose at once, that you might be driven to seek a better; but that religion which you never can lose is the religion of Christ. Now for a straightforward question. Does your religion always dwell in you? I know some people whose godliness lies in their best hats. They put them on when Sunday comes round, and then they are wonderfully religious, and when they get into a place of worship they look into the hats to which they owe so much; but when the new garments are laid by, and the work-day hat is on, in which they go to the City or the workshop, they act as badly as other men. The Sunday bonnet and go-to-meeting dress make a deal of difference to some people. When the hymn book and the Bible are near at hand, they are devout; when the ledger and the day book are near what a change comes over the scene. Genuine religion is *in* a man, you cannot lay it aside as the soldier may hang up his sword or put away his regimentals, but you carry it with you everywhere, it is your delight to do so.

Lastly, *does your religion spring up within your soul by the secret energy of the Spirit of God?* Do you feel emotions, longings, regrets and desires, arising in you without any outward prompting? You do not pray by order, but because you cannot help it: you are in need and must pray. Nobody stands by and says, "Lament before God;" you groan because you must groan, and sing because you feel like singing. You pray continually because your soul's needs are constant, and you praise frequently because your soul's gratitude bursts forth like a mighty spring. Your obedience does not arise from a law upon stone, but from a law written on your hearts, from life in you, from heavenly instinct, from the sacred impulses of the Spirit. "For me to live is Christ." Happy is the man who feels the well within him bubbling up, so that it is in his very life to obey the Lord Jesus. God grant we all may drink of the living water for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John iv. 1—42.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—435, 775, 805.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE CONSECRATION OF PRIESTS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 15TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"This is the thing that thou shalt do unto them to hallow them, to minister unto me in the priest's office."—Exodus xxix. 1.

UNDER the law, only one family could serve God in the priest's office, but under the gospel all the saints are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood" (1. Peter ii. 9). In the Christian church no persons whatsoever are set apart to the priesthood above the rest of their brethren, for in us is fulfilled the promise which Israel by reason of her sin failed to obtain—"Ye shall be a kingdom of priests unto me." Paul, in addressing all the saints, bids them present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is their reasonable service. It is the grand design of all the works of divine grace, both for us and in us, to fit us for the office of the spiritual priesthood, and it will be the crown of our perfection when with all our brethren we shall sing unto the Lord Jesus the new song, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." This honour have all the saints: according to Peter, in the second chapter of his First Epistle, it belongs even to new-born babes in grace, for even such are spoken of as forming part of an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices. Nor is this confined to men as was the Aaronic priesthood, for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. My subject to-day is the consecration of priests, but it does not refer exclusively or even specially to persons called clergymen, or ministers, but to all of you who believe in Jesus, for ye are God's clergy, his *cleros*, that is, his inheritance, and ye should be all ministers, ministering according to the grace given to you.

The family of Aaron was *chosen* unto the priesthood, "for no man taketh this honour upon himself, but he that was called thereunto as was Aaron," and even thus all the Lord's people are chosen from before the foundation of the world. Being chosen, Aaron and his sons

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were at God's command *brought nigh* unto the door of the tabernacle. None ever come to God except they are brought to him; even the spouse sings, "he brought me into the banquetting house." Jesus said, "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." We are made nigh by the blood of Jesus and brought nigh by the drawings of the Holy Ghost.

Assuming that you and I have made our calling and election sure, let us further see what is needed to qualify us to serve as priests at the altar of the living God. Follow me carefully as I mention the ceremonies prescribed in the chapter before us, for they teach us necessary things: the outward ceremonies are abolished, but their inner meaning remains.

I. First, THE PRIESTS WERE WASHED. We read in the fourth verse, "Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water." The pure and holy God cannot be served by men of unclean hands and impure hearts; he would not endure it under the law, nor will he tolerate it under the gospel. "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord," and, "Be ye holy for I am holy," are standing precepts of our priesthood. As was well said by the psalmist, "I will wash my hands in innocency, will I compass thine altar, O Lord."

This washing is afforded us in two ways, answering to our double need. First, it is given to us in *regeneration*, wherein we are born of water and of the Spirit. By the power of the Holy Ghost we are renewed creatures in Christ Jesus, and in us is fulfilled the type set for Naaman, who washed in Jordan, and his flesh came again unto even as a little child. Not in the waters of baptism, but in the water of the Holy Spirit are we cleansed from nature's original filthiness; he it is who causes old things to pass away, and makes all new. Through his sanctifying operations we are cleansed from the filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and made vessels fit for Master's use. This washing is in every case essential. You may desire to serve God, but you cannot do it till first you are born. Your whole nature must be cleansed, or you will never be qualified to stand as a priest before the thrice holy God. I marvel how they know nothing about regeneration can dare to call themselves guides, and dead men to quicken souls? Unto such as they style themselves God's ministers. Has God set blind guides, and dead men to do to declare my statutes?"

The need of another form of washing was indicated by the stream which flowed from the pierced breast of Christ, for he came there out blood and water. We must be washed of sin, of which David sang, "Purge me with hyssop a clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." In the cleansing of our faith in Jesus there is given to us a washing to which the Lord Jesus referred when he said, "He that is clean every whit in the sight of God, once for all. It needeth not save to wash his feet, for he is clean." It is washed once from head to foot, to make them ceremonially clean after that they needed only to wash their feet when

place; and even thus our Lord told his disciples when he washed their feet that they had no need of another complete bathing, for they were clean every whit. Believers should not pray to their heavenly Father as if their sins still rested upon them and had never been forgiven, for the Lord has put away their sin, and as far as the east is from the west so far hath he removed their transgressions from them: as they continually accumulate some evil and stain by being in this world, and in this world, they have need to come each day with, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." The first washing has removed all sin as before God the Judge; our daily washing cleanses us from offences towards God as our Father. Even when we walk in the light as God is in the light, and have fellowship with another, we yet need daily cleansing from all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, and blessed be God we have it.

Now, my dear hearers, have you thus been cleansed from all sin? Do you know to-day the power of that word, "Being made free from sin ye became the servants of righteousness"? Have you the blessedness of that man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile? Do not try to stand as a priest before God till you have received this double washing. Remember the great promise of the gospel is to make us priests unto God, but the consecrating process must begin by our being cleansed as sinners from the guilt of sin and the defilement of our nature. He who would serve the Lord must first confess his iniquities and obtain remission, or he can never approach the living God than a leper could enter into the holy place.

I. After being washed THE PRIESTS WERE CLOTHED. They might wear one of the garments which belonged to themselves or to their Father when called. Under garments were provided for them, and outer garments too, within and without their raiment was new and appropriate. They put on what was given them, nothing more and nothing less. No man can serve God acceptably in his own righteousness, it is but filthy rags. We must have the fine linen of an inward sanctification, the outer garment, for glory and for beauty, of the imputed righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We must, in a word, sing with the hymn,

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress."

cannot stand to worship God unless it be so; he will drive us from his presence.

Note, that *these garments were provided for them*. They were at no expense in buying them, nor labour in weaving them, nor skill in making them; they had simply to put them on. And you, dear child of God, have to put on the garments which Jesus Christ has provided for you, at his own cost, and freely bestows upon you out of boundless love. *These garments formed a complete apparel*. They had no shoes upon their feet, it is true, but they would have been superfluous, for the place whereon they stood was holy ground. They were sandalled with reverence. The child of God when he is bedecked in the righteousness of Christ still feels a solemn awe of the Lord, and comes into the presence

of the Most High with lowliest adoration, for he remembers that he is but a creature at his best.

These garments were very comely to look upon. Though the common priests did not wear the breastplate of jewels, nor the bells and pomegranates, nor the girdle of blue and fine twined linen, yet, in their ordinary dress of pure white, they must have been very comely to look upon. Fine white linen is the emblem of the righteousness of the saints, and truly in God's eye, with the exception of his dear Son, there are no lovelier objects in the world than his own people when they are dressed in the garments of salvation.

The dress provided was absolutely necessary to be worn. No priest might offer sacrifice without the appointed garments, for we read in the forty-third verse of the twenty-eighth chapter, "They shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they come in unto the tabernacle of the congregation, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not iniquity, and die." They would have died had they attempted to sacrifice without being clothed according to the law. A man pretending to serve God without the divine righteousness upon him, puts himself in a most perilous position; he is where the flaming wrath of God burns terribly. Better for him to keep his own place in the distance, than to draw near unto the service of God, unless he is adorned with the glorious array which Christ has woven in the loom of his life and dyed in his own blood. Dear brethren, if you desire to worship God aright in holy labour, or prayer, or praise, you must go to your engagements dressed in the righteousness of Jesus, for you can only be "accepted in the Beloved."

III. Then, thirdly, THESE PRIESTS WERE ANOINTED. It does not appear that they were each one *personally* anointed so early in the ceremony, but they saw the fragrant oil poured upon Aaron on their behalf. So you find it written in the seventh verse, "Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him." So that in order to serve God aright, it is needful for us to see the anointing which has been given to our covenant Head, without measure. But you say to me, "Of what benefit can that be to us? We require the unction of the Holy Spirit upon ourselves." True, but the oil which was poured upon Aaron's head went down his beard, and its copious flow descended even to the skirts of his garments; and what you need to know if you are to be a true priest to God is, that the Holy Spirit comes to you through Christ and from Christ, and that it is because your Head is anointed, that you have an unction from the Holy One. You could not have been Christians if he had not first been the Christ. Be of good cheer concerning this, for though you may be one of the lowest members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ, you have an anointing from the Holy One, because Jesus has that anointing, and in the power of that anointing you may minister before the Lord. Further on in the discourse we shall have to show you the personal anointing which you must individually receive, but it is highly important for every worker to see where his fragrance before God must lie,—never in himself, but always in his covenant Head. Be ye filled with the Spirit, but do not dream that the Spirit of God comes to you apart from your Lord. You are the branch, and the sap can only come to you

ough the stem. You are the member, and your life dwells in your ad; divided from Jesus you are dead. Never forget this, for any empt at independence will be fatal. A man in Christ is fragrant with holy perfume before the Lord, but out of Christ he is an unclean ng, and cannot approach the altar.

IV. Fourthly, having been washed, clothed, and representatively ointed, they had next TO SHARE IN THE SIN OFFERING. They were ful men, how could they approach a thrice holy God? You and I : sinful, as we know by bitter experience; how can we hope to stand fore the mercy-seat, and present acceptable sacrifices unto such an e as God is? There is no way of approaching him while our sin is n, it must be covered, covered by a sin-offering. We are told that e sin-offering selected was a bullock without blemish, of the first ar, strong, and vigorous, a perfect being as far as it could be. Lift ur eyes to Jesus, in whom is no spot of sin, being undefiled in nature d immaculate in life. He it is who stands for you, even he who ew no sin, and yet was made sin for you that you might be made e righteousness of God in him. He, in the fulness of his strength, d in the perfection of his manhood, gave himself a ransom and a ostitute for you. View him with wondering gratitude.

The bullock of the sin-offering being brought to the altar, Aaron d his sons were to lay their hands upon it. Read the tenth verse:— ey "shall put their hands upon the head of the bullock." The brew word means more than lightly placing the hand, it gives the ea of pressing hard upon the bullock's head. They came each e and leaned upon the victim, loading him with their burden, signify- g their acceptance of its substitution, their joy that the Lord would ept that victim in their stead. When they put their hands on the llock, they made a confession of sin, and the Rabbis have preserved us the form in which that confession was made, but time forbids r reading it to you. The act was evidently understood by all con- ned as a typical transfer of guilt, and the placing of the bullock of e sin-offering in the place of the sinner. Come, brethren and sisters, ough washed, though clothed, though anointed, come as penitents, d rejoice in the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus. Draw nigh unto the rd with sincere hearts and acknowledge your transgressions, and ain accept your Saviour as your sin-bearer; for a sin-bearer who not accepted by you can be of no service to you. The hands of th must be laid upon the sacrifice: for my part, I like to lay them ere every day, nay, I desire to keep them there always, believing thout ceasing that my sin is imputed no more to me, but by a sacred : of God was laid upon Jesus, according to that sentence, "He hath d on him the iniquity of us all."

The bullock was killed as a token that just as the poor beast was in so they deserved to die for their sins, and that done, the blood s caught in bowls and taken to the altar, and there it was poured out, the bottom of the altar, round about. Read the 17th verse. There ist have been a pool of blood all round the altar, or at any rate a msounded line. What did it signify? Did it not show that our only ess to God is by the blood? They were washed and robed and ointed, and yet they could not reach the altar till the way o it had

been paved with atoning blood. Oh, my brother, there is no way for thee to God as his priest except through the precious blood. We cannot draw near to God, or serve him aright, if we forget the blood of atonement. Our standing is upon and within the blood of sprinkling: we must bring our prayers, praises, preachings, almsgivings, and all other offerings, to the altar, around which the blood is poured. In vain are all good works which are not so presented. See ye well to this, my brethren. It is essential beyond all else.

This done, the choicer and more vital parts of the bullock were taken, and burned upon the altar, to show that even when our Lord Jesus is viewed as a sin offering, he is still a sweet savour unto God, and however he might hide his face from his Son because of our sin, yet he was always in himself well pleasing unto the Father. Hence the inwards of the bullock were burned on the altar, where nothing could be presented but that which was a sweet savour to God. O thou Lamb of God, under whatever aspect we behold thee, thou art still precious to thy Father! Thou wert beloved by him even when thou hadst to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

But because the bullock was a sin-offering, and therefore obnoxious to God, its flesh, and its skin, and all that remained were carried outside the camp, and burned with a quick, consuming fire, as a thing worthy to be destroyed, for sin was upon it, and it must be burned up. Believer, have you seen Jesus as the great offering for sin, made a curse for us? You will never serve God in the priestly office aright unless you see that sin is a hateful thing to God, so hateful that, even when it only lay upon his dear Son by imputation, he could not look upon him, but bruised and smote him until he cried in anguish, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani." "Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the camp," to show that not without his being treated as a transgressor could we be treated as righteous, and also that sin is in itself a deadly pest, which must not be endured in the camp of the chosen. Never let your joy concerning the atonement lessen your horror of transgression:—

**"With your joy for pardoned guilt,
Mourn that you pierced the Lord."**

I am persuaded that no one will ever serve the Lord humbly and devotedly unless he obtains a clear view of the Lord Jesus as his sin-offering, and substitute. Some preachers either do not know that truth, or else they think too little of it to make it prominent in their sermons, hence their ministry does not save souls. The great saving truth is the doctrine of atonement by substitution. Without it ministers will keep souls in bondage year after year, because they do not proclaim the finished redemption, nor let men know that sin was laid on Jesus that it might be for ever removed from the believer. "He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" brethren, get that truth clearly into your heads, and intensely into your hearts, and you will become devoted to the Lord. Do not only believe that grand truth, but in the spirit of it serve ye the Lord without weariness, seeing ye have been redeemed with a price far more precious than silver and gold.

V. After the sin-offering the consecrated ones went on to TAKE THEIR SHARE IN THE BURNT-OFFERING. The burnt-offering differed widely from the sin-offering. The sin-offering indicated Christ as bearing our sin, but the burnt-offering sets him forth as presenting an acceptable offering unto the Lord. God required of us perfect obedience, he demanded from us a pure and holy life, and the requirement was a just one: but among us all there is none righteous, no, not one; how then could we stand before the thrice Holy Lord? Beloved, Jesus stands in the gap. Before God his righteousness was perfect, acceptable, and delightful, and for us it is presented. He is made of God unto us righteousness. The burnt-offering does not bring to light the remembrance of sin except so far as it reminds us that we were in need of a perfect righteousness; it brings before us only the thought of Jesus offering himself as a sweet savour unto God, and making us accepted in the Beloved. The priests were to bring a ram without blemish, and when killed, before it was laid on the altar, its inwards were to be washed, for otherwise the natural foulness of its body would prevent its being a fit type of that Saviour who is pure within, in whom there is no taint of original sin. When this ram was brought the priests were to lay their hands upon it, as much as to say, "We accept this ram, that it may represent us as acceptable before God." Oh, beloved, lay your hands on Jesus now by faith, and say, "Jesus, I accept thee as my righteousness before the Lord, and believe that as God sees in thee all that is delightful, and smells a sweet savour of rest, so he will be well pleased with me for thy sake."

This offering when placed upon the altar was wholly burnt; not a fragment of it was put outside the camp, not a morsel of it was eaten by man, but the whole ram was utterly consumed with fire, for it was a burnt-offering unto the Lord. And thus, dear friends, it is very delightful to us to see that God received Jesus, the whole of Jesus; there was nothing in him to reject, and nothing that could be done without. He satisfied the Lord; he asked no more, he would have no less. Jesus has rendered to the Father all that he could desire from men, and the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake. A sense of acceptance is a very necessary thing to those who would worship God aright, for if you do not enjoy it the legal spirit will begin to work to win acceptance by merit, and that will spoil all. If men dream that they are to pray or preach their way to heaven, or to do this, and to do that, to be acceptable with God, they will offer strange fire on the Lord's altar and bring sacrifices with which he can never be pleased. Vain oblations he will call them, and frown on the offerers. How delightful it is to serve God with a sense that we are pleasant in the sight of God; for this fills us with gratitude, inspires us with zeal, creates boldness, and fosters every grace. With what joy will you stand to minister daily whatever your calling may be, whether it be as a mother in the family, a servant in the house, a minister in the pulpit, or a teacher in the class. You will not need driving like a slave to his toil, but like a dearly beloved child you will rejoice to please your Father in all things. Work in the prison-house of the law under the lash of conscience is a very different thing from holy work in the sunlight of the Lord's countenance and the liberty

of full acceptance. He who knows that he is not now to be judged and condemned by the law, but stands for ever justified because of what Christ has done for him, serves his God with a holy alacrity unknown to others.

VI. After the priests had seen for themselves the sin-offering and the burnt-offering, it was needful that they should partake of a third sacrifice, which was A PEACE OFFERING. Another ram was brought as unblemished and vigorous as the former, for Jesus is never to be typified by anything but the best of its kind. We are told in the nineteenth verse that Aaron and his sons were to put their hands upon it, for, whatever view of the great sacrifice they might gaze upon, it was imperatively necessary that they should have a personal interest in it; mere theory will never do, we must have personal acquaintance with the Lord, and we must have him to be our own. So long as we have no part or lot in Jesus we are as much excluded from the service of the Lord as were the uncircumcised and the unclean. No man can run the heavenly race unless he is looking unto Jesus, he cannot be a soldier of the Lord unless he has Christ for his Captain, he cannot feed others until he has himself fed on Jesus, nor bring others to Jesus till he has come himself. "The husbandman that laboureth must first be partaker of the fruits"; this is one of the laws of spiritual husbandry, and cannot be set aside. Lay your hand upon the head of the substitute, before you venture to lay it upon the work of the Lord.

When this was done, the peace-offering was slain. A sin-offering was a thing obnoxious to God, and represented expiation made for sin, a burnt-offering was a sweet-savour offering unto God, and it was all burned on the altar, all being for the Lord alone,—thus representing the Lord Jesus as rendering to the Lord a complete obedience, which magnified the law and made it honourable; but the peace offering was shared between the Lord and the priest or offerer. The Lord's part was consumed with fire upon the altar, and another portion was eaten by man in the holy place. The peace offering was thus an open declaration of the communion which had been established between God and man, so that they ate together, rejoicing in the same offering. Beloved brethren, when you have felt the sweets of seeing the Lord as a sin-offering, and then have tasted the high joys of acceptance as you have gazed upon him as the burnt-offering, satisfying Jehovah's heart, it is surpassingly delightful to behold the Lamb of God as our peace-offering, making glad the heart of God and man, and bringing both in bonds of friendship to a common meeting-place. The eternal Father says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and we cry, "This is our beloved Lord, in whom our inmost soul rejoices."

In the peace-offering the communion between the priests and the Lord commenced outwardly by their being consecrated by the blood of the peace-offering. Moses dipped his finger in the blood, and smeared first the priest's right ear, then his thumb, and then his toe; as Matthew Henry says, as if they marked the boundaries and extremities of man's being, to show that all that was enclosed within the crimson lines was consecrated unto the Lord. We go not too far when we add that it signified the dedication of each faculty. The ear was forth to hear God's commands, to listen to divine teaching, and

whole house with hallowed mirth. Everything expresses its joy according to its nature; infinite love, therefore, reveals its joy in acts of love. The nature of God being as much above ours as the heaven is above the earth, the expression of his joy is therefore all the loftier, and his gifts the greater. Still, there is a likeness between God's way of expressing joy and ours, which it will be profitable to note. How do we express ourselves, ordinarily, when we are glad? We do so very commonly by a display of *bounty*. When in the olden time our kings came into the city of London, or a great victory was celebrated, the conduit in Cheapside ran with red wine, and even the gutters flowed with it. Then were there tables set in the street, and my lords, and the aldermen, and the mayor kept open house, and everybody was fed to the full. Joy was expressed by hospitality. You have seen the picture of the young heir coming of age, and have noticed how the artist depicts the great yard of the manor-house as full of men and women, who are eating and drinking to their hearts' content. At Christmas seasons, and upon marriage days and harvest homes, men ordinarily express their joy by bountiful provision; so also does the father in this wondrous parable exhibit the utmost bounty, representing thereby the boundless liberality of the great Father of spirits, who shows his joy over penitents by the manner in which he enters them. The best robe, the ring, the shoes, and the fatted calf, and the "Let us eat and be merry," all show by their bountifulness that God is glad. His oxen and his fallings are killed, for the feast of mercy is the banquet of the Lord. So untiried are the gifts of his gracious hand that the receivers of his favours have cried out in amazement, "Who is a God like unto thee?" Beloved, consider awhile the Lord's bounty to returning sinners, blotting out their sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud their iniquities, justifying them in the righteousness of Christ, endowing them with his Holy Spirit, regenerating them, comforting them, illuminating them, purifying them, strengthening them, guiding them, protecting them, filling them with all his own fulness, satisfying their mouth with good things, and crowning them with tender mercies. I see in the bounty of God with which he so liberally endows returning sinners a mighty proof that his inmost soul rejoices over the salvation of men.

At glad times men generally manifest some *speciality* in their bounty. On the day of the young heir's coming of age the long stored cask of wine is broke, and the best bullcock is roasted whole. So here in the parable we read, "*Bring forth the best robe*," indicating that it had been laid by and kept in store until then. Nobody had used that robe, it was locked up in the wardrobe, only to be brought out on some very special occasion. This was the happiest day that ever had made glad the house, and therefore "Bring forth the best robe," no other will suffice. Meat is wanted for the banquet. Let a calf be killed. Which shall it be? A calf taken at random from the herd? No, but *the fatted calf* which has been standing in the stalls, and is well fed, and has been reserved for a festival. Oh, beloved, when God blesses a sinner he shows his joy by giving him the reserved mercies, the *special* treasures of everlasting love, the precious things of grace, the secret of the covenant: yea, he has given to sinners the best of the best in giving

pable of any concern about us, or interest in us, one way or the other. To look upon him as utterly impassive and incapable of anything like emotion does not, to my mind, exalt the Lord, but rather brings him down to be comparable to the gods of stone or wood, which cannot sympathise with their worshippers. No, Jehovah is not insensible. He is the living God, and everything that goes with life—pure, perfect, holy life, is to be found in him. Yet must such a subject always be spoken of very tenderly, with solemn awe, because, albeit we know something of what God is, for we are made in the image of God, and the best likeness of God undoubtedly was man as he came from his Maker's hand, yet man is not God, and even in his perfectness he must have been a very tiny miniature of God; while now that he has sinned he has blotted and blurred that image. The finite cannot fully mirror the Infinite, nor can the grand, glorious, essential properties of Deity be communicated to creatures: they must remain peculiar to God alone. The Lord is, however, continually represented as displaying joy. Moses declared to sinful Israel, that if they returned and obeyed the voice of the Lord, the Lord would again rejoice over them for good, as he rejoiced over their fathers (Deut. xxx. 9). The Lord is said to rejoice in his works and to delight in mercy, and surely we must believe it. Wherefore should we doubt it? Many passages of Scripture speak very impressively of God's joy in his people. Zephaniah puts it in the strongest manner: "He will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." Our God is for ever the happy or blessed God; we cannot think of him as other than supremely blessed. Still, from the Scriptures we gather that he displays on certain occasions a special joy which he would have us recognise. I do not think that it can be mere parable, but it is real fact, that the Lord does rejoice over returning and repenting sinners.

Every being manifests its joy according to its nature, and seeks means for its display suitable to itself. It is so with men. When the old Romans celebrated a triumph because some great general returned a victor from Africa, Greece, or Asia with the spoils of a long campaign, how did the fierce Roman nature express its joy? Why, in the Colosseum, or in some yet vaster amphitheatre, where buzzing nations choked the ways, they gathered in their myriads to behold not only beasts, but their fellow men, "butchered to make a Roman holiday." Cruelly upon an extraordinary scale was their way of expressing the joy of their iron hearts. Look at the self-indulgent man! He has had a prosperous season, and has made a lucky hit, as he calls it, or some event has occurred in his family which makes him very jubilant; what will he do to show forth his joy? Will he bow the knee in gratitude, or lift a hymn of praise? Not he. He will hold a drinking bout, and when he and his fellows are mad with wine his joy will find expression! The sensual show their joy by sensuality. Now, God whose name is good, and whose nature is love, when he has joy expresses it in mercy, in lovingkindness, and grace. The father's joy in the parable before us showed itself in the full forgiveness accorded, in the kiss of perfect love bestowed, in the gift of the best robe, the ring, and the sandals, and in the glad some festival which filled the

is no work of God which blocks the way. He delights in the delight, and joys in their joy. It is the Father's will that penitent sinner should at once believe in Jesus, at once and completely forgive, and immediately enter into rest. If any of you came to Jesus without the dreary interval of terror which is so frequent, I pray you do not judge yourselves as though your conversions were dubious—they are all the more instead of all the less genuine because they bear rather the marks of the gospel than of the law. The weeping of Peter, which in a few days turns to joy, is far better than the horror of Judas, which ends in suicide. Conversions, recorded in Scripture, are for the most part exceedingly rapid. They were pricked in the heart at Pentecost, and the same day they were baptised and added to the church, because they had found peace with God through Jesus Christ. Paul was smitten down with conviction, and in three days was baptised believing. Perhaps the sign is inapt, but I was about to say that sometimes God's power is very near us that the lightning flash of conviction is often attended at the very same moment by the deep thunder of the Lord's voice which drives away our fears and proclaims peace and pardon to the soul. In many cases the sharp needle of the law is immediately followed by the silken thread of the gospel; the showers of repentance succeeded at once by the sunshine of faith; peace overtakes penitence and walks arm in arm with her into yet fuller rest.

Having thus reminded you that God would have penitents very soon rejoice, I want to spend this morning in setting forth the joy which is caused by pardoned sin. That joy is threefold. We will take about it, first, as *the joy of God over sinners*; secondly, *the joy of sinners in God*; and, thirdly, what is so often forgotten, *the joy of the servants for their too rejoiced*, for the father said, "Let us eat and be merry; and one of the points of the parable is just this, that as in the case the lost sheep the shepherd calleth together his friends and neighbours, and as in the case of the piece of money the woman calleth her bours, and as in this case, also, others share in the joy which chiefly belongs to the loving father and the returning wanderer.

I. *The joy of God over sinners.* It is always difficult to speak of the ever-blessed God becomingly when we have to describe him touched by emotions; I pray, therefore, to be guided in my speech by the Holy Spirit. We have been educated into the idea that the Lord is above emotions, either of sorrow or pleasure. That he cannot suffer for instance, is always laid down as a self-evident postulate. Is this quite so clear? Cannot he do or bear anything he chooses to do? What means the Scripture which says that man's sin before the Lord made the Lord repent that he had made man on the earth, "and grieved him at his heart"? Is there no meaning in the Lord's own language, "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, Are we not forbidden to grieve the Holy Spirit? Is he not described as having been vexed by ungodly men? Surely, then, he can be grieved: it cannot be an altogether meaningless expression. For my part, I rejoice to worship the living God, who, because he is living, does grieve and rejoice. It makes one feel more love to him than if he dwell on some serene Olympus, careless of all our woes, because in-

Metropolitan Tabernacle Baptist.

THE RECEPTION OF SINNERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 22ND, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry."—Luke xv. 22, 28.

Last Lord's-day we spoke upon the consecration of priests. That theme might seem too high for troubled hearts and trembling consciences, who fear that they shall never be made priests and kings unto God. So glorious a privilege appears to them to hang in the dim, distant future, if, indeed, they reach it at all. Therefore, at this time, we will go down from the elevated regions to comfort those who are seeking the Lord, with the view of helping them in their turn to climb also.

We speak this morning, not of the consecration of priests, but of the reception of sinners, and this, according to our text, is a very joyful business, it is even described as a merry-making, accompanied with music and with dancing. We very frequently speak of the sorrow for sin which accompanies conversion, and I do not think we can speak of it too often; but yet there is a possibility of our overlooking the equally holy and remarkable joy which attends the return of a soul to God. It has been a very common error to suppose that a man must pass through a very considerable time of despondency, if not of horror of mind, before he can find peace with God: now in this parable the father seems determined to cut short that period; he stops his son in the very middle of his confession, and before he can ask to be made as one of the hired servants, his mournful style is changed for rejoicing, for the father has already fallen on his neck and kissed his trembling lips into a sweet silence. It is not the Lord's desire that sinners should tarry long in the state of unbelieving conviction of sin, it is something wrong in themselves which keeps them there; either they are ignorant of the freeness and fulness of Christ, or they harbour self-righteous hopes, or they cling to their sins. Sin lieth at the door, it

up what they thought the choicer portions, but my soul is more than content with what the rule of the house allots me, in fact, these are the best parts of the sacrifice.

In closing, I would call the attention of believers for a moment to the fact, that Aaron and his sons received this consecration for life. You will find in the ninth verse the words, "The priests' office shall be theirs for a perpetual statute." "Once a priest, always a priest," is the rule in the priesthood to which we belong. We abide in Christ, and we also have an anointing which abideth in us, for we have been sealed with "that Holy Spirit of promise." Do not act at any time as if you were not priests. If you profess to be the Lord's do not lie about it, let it be truly so, and that every day, and all the day, and in all things, for he hath made us kings and priests unto God for ever. Do not, I beseech you, dishonour your sacred character.

I shall ask two questions in closing. Do you and I offer sacrifice continually? Unto this we are called, according to the apostle, that we should offer the sacrifice of prayer and praise continually. To him the cherubim continually cry "Holy, holy, holy." Do we every day feel that our whole being is "Holiness unto the Lord?" In the workshop, in the home, at the fireside, in the field, as well as in the prayer meeting, the vows of God are upon us; we are a separated people, and belong unto God alone? O see ye to this!

What have you to offer now? Have you brought an offering now? What will you render unto God for all his benefits towards you? Is there nothing to be done for Christ this afternoon? no sick one to be visited, no poor child to be instructed, no backslider to be reclaimed? Shall a single hour go by without a sacrifice? I charge you, brethren, continually bring of your substance, continually bring of your talent, continually bring of your influence. If God be God, and if you be his priests, serve him. If you be not his ordained ones, then you live unto yourselves, and it will be well to know it: anything is better than to be hypocrites: but if you be true men I beseech you by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies, your souls, your spirits unto God, which is but a reasonable service. When you have once for all made the consecration, may God grant you grace continually to stand to it, and he shall have the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Exodus xxix. 1—37.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—411, 663, 878.

burden to and fro. I scarcely know why, except that you who are God's priests have not had your hands filled that you may stand still; but that you may move them to and fro in the earth, that east, west, north, and south may know the benefit thereof, and that your brethren on either hand may commune with you in your ministering. Every now and then the priests stopped the horizontal motion, and heaved or lifted up their offering, as if to say, "It is all for thee, O Jehovah. We lift it up into the presence of thine august Majesty, for it is thine, and we are about to lay it on thine altar." Believers, if you have had your hands filled by God, you must not be idle. Your fulness is meant for distribution to God's glory. If the clouds be full of rain they empty themselves upon the earth; if the rivers be full of water they run into the sea, and if God gives you a fulness, it is that you may communicate it to others and devote it to himself. Jesus Christ breaks the bread and multiplies it, and gives it to the disciples to divide among the multitude. Many a man becomes empty handed because he does not know the art of distribution. He has his hands full and cries out, "Where shall I bestow my goods? my hands are full and I would keep it for myself and my family." My brothers, wave it among your neighbours, lift it up to God in solemn consecration, and then let it be laid upon God's altar, since for this purpose you were called to be a priest unto the Most High.

Last of all there followed a very pleasant part of the matter—they sat down and feasted. God had received his part in the burning of the victim on the altar, and now Aaron and his sons were to "eat those things wherewith the atonement was made." You cannot serve God without strength; you cannot have strength except you eat, and you must be careful what you take into your soul, for according to what your food is will your strength be. The Lord would have his people fed daily upon Christ, and fed in the holy place where they serve. Christ is delightful to God and is delightful to you, and you must feed on him in communion with God, in the place of holy fellowship. There is no sustenance for our inner nature anywhere but in Jesus, but, blessed be his name, no other sustenance can be desired, for he fills us to the full, and gives us a strength which is equal to our day.

I know some good people who are very busy indeed in the services of God, and I am very delighted that they should be, but I would caution them against working and never eating. They give up attending the means of grace as hearers, because they have so much to do as workers. That is very well, and some strong men may be able to do it safely, but I do not think many of us can afford to do without the regular hearing of the word. Whatever may be our zeal to work like Martha, we must also sit at Jesus' feet like Mary, or we shall become "cumbered with much serving." The priest is to offer sacrifice, but he must have time, also, to feed on the portion allotted to him. How sweet it is to enjoy the food of God, the flesh of Jesus, the bread of heaven. Aaron and his sons had the breast and the shoulder for their part—the love of Christ's heart and the power of Christ's arm. I am thankful, as one of God's priests, to have the shoulder and breast, for power and love are needful for my comfort and support. Eli's vile sons were wont to drive a three-pronged hook into the cauldron, and bring

and never forget that thou needest the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. Bless God for justification, but seek after sanctification. Praise him for perfection in Christ Jesus, and go on to obtain the perfect work of the Holy Ghost. We have a cleansing and we also have an unction from the Holy One: as our experience is, so let our teaching be, for the priests' garments taught the people. We are to go forth as priests, and declare the virtue of the atoning sacrifice, but we must also manifest the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives.

The next part of the ceremony was very singular. The priests had their hands filled. Certain parts of the ram were taken, and "one loaf of bread, and one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer out of the basket of unleavened bread, which is before the Lord," and all these were put into the hands of Aaron and his sons, so that they stood with their hands full before the Lord. See the beauty of this, and pray for a complete realization of it yourself. The Lord intends to make you a priest, but your hands are full of sin. What have you to do? You must lay those guilty hands on the sin-offering, and make confession, and exercise faith: then the sin is gone, being transferred to another, and your hands are empty. What next? Will the Lord leave you empty-handed? No, he gives you somewhat to offer. He allows you a part of the peace-offering to fill your hands withal, and this you present before him as a wave-offering. It is a blessed thing to stand before God with your hands full of Christ. The service which consists in holding forth Jesus is most blessed. I love preaching when I have to preach Jesus only. Then I come before you, not empty-handed, but loaded with meat and bread for you. How idle it is for us to stand before God with nothing to offer, and if we have not Jesus we have nothing, or worse than nothing. We may also interpret the full hands of the priests as representing our being enriched with the truth. I believe it used to be a ceremony in the English church that, when the bishop ordained a minister, he always placed the Bible in his hands, to set forth what he was expected to deal out to the people. When the Lord ordains his people to be priests unto him he puts the Bible into their hands, and fills their heads and hearts with the truth thereof. When you have the inspired word in your hands, you have both meat for strong men and bread for children; you have all sorts of spiritual food for all sorts of persons, and you need not fear that they will turn away dissatisfied, they cannot need more to feed upon than the bread of God's altar and the flesh of God's peace-offering.

When their hands were full, and they stood at the altar, it indicated the way in which they brought to the Lord all that they had. We cannot act as priests before God with empty hands. "None of you shall appear before me empty," is his command. Has he given us wealth? Let us give without grudging, devising liberal things. Never neglect weekly storing and weekly offering, these are fit parts of Sabbath worship. Have we time, talent, influence, let us consecrate them all, and come with those possessions which Jesus has lent us, and present them with the flesh of the peace-offering, and the sacred oil.

Holding this in their hands, the priests had to wave their pleasant

to drink in divine promises, and no more to regard falsehood, vanity, and vice. The hand was now henceforth to be engaged in the divine service with diligence and intelligence, for the right hand was thus marked, and the thumb, the most useful part of it: for holy work the hand must be reserved. The feet were to be equally holy, the priest, wherever he stood, or walked, or ran, was to be "holiness unto the Lord." He had no right to go anywhere if that blood-marked foot would be out of place. The whole man was thus consecrated by the blood of the everlasting covenant: a solemn seal indeed! Our personal share of the blood of Jesus has already done this for us, it has constrained us to yield unto God our whole manhood, spirit, soul, and body. My brother, you can never serve God as his priest unless you are wholly given up to God through the blood of Jesus. You must have this verse in your very soul, and must masticate it, digest it, assimilate it into your nature—"Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and your spirits, which are his." This surrender of yourself unto the Lord commences your communion with the Lord: the peace-offering has begun.

The next thing was to sprinkle the priests all over with a mixture of oil and blood, and this is that anointing which I said we should see by-and-by. "Thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons, and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him." Yes, brethren, we need to know that double anointing, the blood of Jesus which cleanses, and the oil of the Holy Spirit which perfumes us. It is well to see how these two blend in one, Jesus and his atonement, the Spirit and his sanctification; the work for us and the work in us. Read the third of John, and there you find, "Ye must be born again;" but side by side with it you get, "Whosoever believeth in him is not condemned." It is not so easy for the preacher always to give these two doctrines with equal clearness and distinctness; he is very apt, when he is preaching up simple faith, and saying, "Only believe," to forget that equally important statement, "Ye must be born again." It is a terrible blunder to set the blood and the oil in opposition, they must always go together. Yet there are some who have even spoken depreciatingly of repentance, which is an essential part of the work of the Spirit of God; their zeal for holding up the righteousness of Christ by faith has driven them beyond the bounds of truth. Brethren, do not err in this matter, but abide in equal loyalty to these equally sure and important verities. If you would serve the Lord aright, you must have the blood and the oil sprinkled upon you, that is to say, you must know personally the influence of them both. What a strange sight these men in white garments must have presented, despatched all over with blood and oil. Did that stain their garments? No, it adorned and perfumed them. Remember that saying, "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." No purity is comparable to that which comes by the Spirit and by the atoning blood: in God's sight these priests thus disstained were more beautiful by far than they had been before. Oh, my soul, prize Jesus and his blood,

them Christ Jesus, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The best that heaven affords God bestows on sinners when they come to him. No scraps and odds and ends are dealt out to hungry and thirsty seekers, but in princely munificence of unstinting love the heavenly Father deals out abundant grace. I would that sinners would come and try my Lord's hospitality; they would find his table to be more richly loaded than even that of Solomon, though thirty oxen and a hundred sheep did not suffice for one day's provision for the household of that magnificent sovereign. If they would but come, even the largest-hearted among them would be wonder-struck as they saw how richly God supplied all their need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

"Rags exchanged for costly treasure,
Shoes and ring and heaven's best robe!
Gifts of love which knows no measure;
Who can tell the heart of God?
All his loved ones—his redeemed ones,
Perfect are in his abode."

We also show our joy by a *concentration of thought* upon the object of it. When a man is carried away with joy he forgets everything else, and gives himself up to the one delight. David was so glad to bring back the Ark of the Lord that he danced before the Lord with all his might, being clad only with a linen ephod. He laid aside his stately garments, and thought so little of his dignity that Michal sneered at him; he was so much absorbed in adoring his Lord that all regard to appearances was quite gone. Observe well the parable, and think you hear the father say, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on *him*, and put a ring on *his* hand and shoes on *his* feet, and let us eat and be merry, for *this my son* was dead and is alive again." The son alone is in the father's eye, and the whole house must be ordered in reference to him. Nothing is to be thought of to-day but the long-lost son, he is paramount in the wardrobe, the jewel room, the farmyard, the kitchen, and the banquetting chamber. He that was lost, he that was dead, he being found and alive, engrosses the whole of the father's mind. Sinner, it is wonderful how God sets all his thoughts on you according to his promise, "I will set mine eyes upon them for good," (Jer. xxiii. 6); and again, "I will watch over them to build and to plant saith the Lord." The Lord thinketh upon the poor and needy, his eyes are upon them and his ears are open to their cry. He thinks as much of each penitent sinner as if he were the only being in the universe. O penitent, for you is the working of the Lord's providence to bring you home, for you the training of his ministers that they might know how to reach your heart, for you the gifts of the Spirit upon them that they might be powerful with your conscience; yea, for you his Son, his eternal Son once bleeding on the cross, and now sitting in the highest heavens making intercession for you. I saw in Amsterdam the diamond cutting, and I noticed great wheels, a large factory and powerful engines, and all the power was made to bear upon a small stone no larger than the nail of my little finger. All that huge machinery for that little stone, because it was so precious! Methinks I see you poor insignificant sinners, who have rebelled against your God, brought back to your Father's house, and

now the whole universe is full of wheels and all those wheels are working together for your good, to make out of you a jewel fit to glisten in the Redeemer's crown. God is not represented as saying more of creation than that "it was very good," but in the work of grace he is described as singing for joy. He breaks the eternal silence and cries, "my son is found." As the philosopher when he had compelled nature to yield her secret ran through the street crying, "Eureka! Eureka! I have found it! I have found it!" so does the Father dwell on the word, "my son that was dead, is alive again, he that was lost is found." The whole of Scripture aims at the bringing back again of the Lord's banished, for this the Redeemer leaves his glory, for this the church sweeps her house and lights her candle, and when the work is done all other bliss is secondary to the surpassing joy of the Lord, of which he bids his ransomed ones partake, saying, "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

We also show our joy by *an alacrity of motion*. I quoted David just now. It was so with him, he danced before the ark. I cannot imagine David walking slowly before the ark, or creeping after it like a mourner at a funeral. I often notice the difference between your coming to this place and people going to other places of worship. I remark a very solemn, stately, and sombre motion in almost everybody else, but you come tripping along as if you were glad to go up to the house of the Lord; you do not regard the place of our joyous assemblies as a sort of religious prison, but as the palace and banquetting house of the great King. When any one is joyous he is sure to show it by the quickness of his motions. Harken to the father, he says, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and let us eat and be merry." As quickly as possible he pours out sentence after sentence. There is no delay; no interval between the commands. Might he not have said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and let us look at him awhile, and sit down and prepare him for the next step; and in an hour's time, or to-morrow, we will put a ring on his hand; and then soon we will put shoes on his feet; he is best without shoes for the present, for perhaps if he has shoes on he will run away. As to the festival, perhaps we had better rejoice over him when we see whether his repentance is genuine." No, no, no, the father's heart is too glad; he must bless his boy at once, heap on his favours, and multiply his tokens of love. When the Lord receives a sinner, he runs to meet him, he falls on his neck, he kisses him, he speaks to him, he forgives him, he justifies him, he sanctifies him, he puts him among the children, he opens the treasures of his grace to him, and all in quick succession. Within a few minutes after he has been cleansed from sin, the prodigal is robed, and adorned, and shod for service. The love of our Redeemer's heart made him say to the poor thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise;" he would not let him linger in pain on the cross, but carried him away to Paradise in an hour or two. Love and joy are ever quick of foot. God is slow to anger, but he is so plenteous in his mercy that his grace overflows and rushes on like a torrent when it leaps along the ravine.

Once more, the joy of the father was shown as ours often is by *our*

utterance. It is hard for a glad man to hold his tongue. What can dumb people do when they are very happy? I cannot imagine how they endure silence at such times; it must then be a terrible misfortune. When you are very happy you must tell somebody. So does this father. He pours out his joy, and the utterance is very simple. "My son was dead, and is alive again, was lost, and is found." Yet, simple as it is, it is poetry. The poetry of the Hebrews consisted in parallelism, or a repetition of the sense or a part of the words. Here are two lines which pair with each other, and make a verse of Hebrew poetry. Glad men when they speak naturally and simply always say the right thing in the very best manner, using nature's poetry, as does the father here. Note, also, that there is reiteration in his utterance. He might have been satisfied to say, "This my son was dead and is alive again." No; the fact is so sweet he must repeat it, "He was lost, and is found." Even thus we speak when we are very full of sweet content; the heart bubbleth up with a good matter, and over again and over again we rehearse our joy. When the morsel is sweet we roll it under the tongue. We cannot help it. So the Lord rejoices over sinners, and tells his joy in holy scripture in varied phrase and metaphor, and though those scriptures are simple in their style, yet they contain the very essence of poetry. The bards of the Bible stand in the first rank amongst the sons of song, God himself deigning to use poetry to utter his joy because a more prosaic manner would be all too cold and tame. Hear how he puts it: "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." "I will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in my people." We might have been left in the dark about this joy of God; we might have been coldly informed that God would save sinners, and we might never have known that he found such joy in it; but the divine joy was too great to be concealed, the great heart of God could not restrain itself, he must tell out to all the universe the delight which the exercise of mercy brought to him. It was meet that he should make merry and be glad, and therefore he did it, for nothing that is meet to be done will ever be neglected by the Lord our God.

Thus, dear friends, have I feebly spoken of the joy of God, and I want you to notice that it is a delight in which every attribute of God takes a share. Condescension ran to meet the son, love fell on his neck, grace kissed him, wisdom clothed him, truth gave him the ring, peace shod him, wisdom provided the feast, and power prepared it. No one attribute of the divine nature quarrels with the forgiveness and salvation of a sinner; not one attribute holds back from the beloved employ. Power strengthens the weak, and mercy binds up the wounded; justice smiles upon the justified sinner, for it is satisfied through the atoning blood, and truth puts forth her hand to guarantee that the promise of grace is fulfilled; immutability confirms what has been done, and omniscience looks around to see that nothing is left undone. The whole of Deity is brought to bear upon a poor worm of the dust, to lift it up and transform it into an heir of God, joint-heir with the Only Begotten. The joy of God occupies the whole of his being, so that when we think of it we may well say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name," since all that is within him is engaged to bless his saints.

This joy of the Lord should give every sinner great confidence in coming to God by Jesus Christ, for if you would be glad to be saved, he will be glad to save you; if you long to lay your head in your Father's bosom, your Father's bosom longs to have it there; if you want to say, "I have sinned," he equally longs to say to you, by acts of love, "I forgive thee freely." If you pine to be his child in his own house once more, the door is open, and he himself is on the watch. Come and welcome, come and welcome, and no more delay.

II. I have now to speak of THE JOY OF THE SINNER. The son was glad. He did not express it in words, as far as I can see in the parable, but he felt it none the less—but all the more. Sometimes silence is discreet, and it was so in this case; at other times it is absolutely forced upon you by inability to utter the emotion, and this also was true of the prodigal. The son's heart was too full for utterance in words, but he had speaking eyes, and a speaking countenance as he looked on that dear father. As he put on the robe, the ring, and the shoes, he must have been too astonished to speak. He wept in showers that day, but the tears were not salt with grief; they were sweet tears, glittering like the dew of the morning. What would make the son glad, think you? Why, the father's love, the father's forgiveness, and restoration to his old place in the father's heart. That was the point. But then each gift would serve as a token of that love and make the joy overflow. There was *the robe* put on,—the dress of a son, and of a son well beloved and accepted. Have you noticed how the robe answered to his confession? The sentences match each other thus: "Father, I have sinned;"—"Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." Cover all his sins with Christ's righteousness; put away his sin by imputing to him the righteousness of the Lord Jesus. The robe also met his condition; he was in rags, therefore, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him," and you shall see no more of his rags. It was fit that he should be thus arrayed, in token of his restoration. He who is re-endowed with the privileges of a son should not be dressed in sordid clothes, but wear raiment suitable to his station. Moreover, as a festival was about to begin he ought to wear a festive garment. It would not be seemly for him to feast and be merry in his rags. Put the best robe on him that he may be ready to take his place at the banquet. So when the penitent comes to God he is not only covered, as to the past, by the righteousness of Christ, but he is prepared for the future blessedness which is reserved for the pardoned ones, yea, he is fitted to begin the rejoicing at once.

Then came *the ring*, a luxury rather than a necessary, except that now he was a son it was well that he should be restored to all the honours of his relationship. The signet ring in the east in former times conferred great privileges: in those days men did not sign their names, but stamped with their signet upon wax, so that the ring gave a man power over property, and made him a sort of other self to the man whose ring he wore. The father gives the son a ring, and how complete an answer was that gift to another clause of his confession. Let me read the two sentences together, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." "Put a ring on his hand." The gift precisely meets

the confession. It also tallied with his changed condition. How singular that the very hand which had been feeding swine should now wear a ring. There were no rings on his hands when they were soiled at the trough, I warrant you ; but now he is a swine-feeder no longer, but an honoured son of a rich father. Slaves wear no rings. Juvenal laughs at certain freed-men because they were seen walking up and down the Via Sacra with conspicuous rings on their fingers, the emblems of their new-found liberty. The ring indicated the penitent's liberty from sin, and his enjoyment of the full privileges of his Father's house. O, beloved, the Lord will make you glad if you come to him, by putting the seal of the Holy Spirit's indwelling upon you, which is both the earnest of the inheritance and the best adornment of the hand of your practical character. You shall have a sure and honourable token, and shall know that all things are yours, whether things present, or things to come. This ring upon your finger will declare your marriage union to Christ, set forth the eternal love which the Father has fixed upon you, and be the abiding pledge of the perfect work of the Holy Ghost.

Then they put *shoes* on his feet. I suppose he had worn out his own. In the east servants do not usually wear shoes at home, and especially in the best rooms of the house. The master and the son wear the sandals, but not the servants, so that this order was an answer to the last part of the penitent's prayer, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." "No," says the father, "put shoes on his feet." In the forgiven sinner the awe which puts off its shoes is to be overmatched by the familiarity which wears the shoes which infinite love provides. The forgiven one is no longer to tremble at Sinai, but he is to come unto Mount Zion, and to have familiar intercourse with God. Thus also the restored one was shod for filial service—he could run upon his father's errands, or work in his father's fields. He had now in every way all that he could want—the robe that covered him, the ring that adorned him, and the shoe that prepared him for travel or labour.

Now ye awakened and anxious ones who are longing to draw nigh to God, I would that this description of the joy of the prodigal would induce you to come at once. Come, ye naked, and he will say, "Bring forth the best robe." Come, ye that see your natural deformity through sin, and he will adorn you with a ring of beauty. Come, ye who feel as if you could not come, for ye have bleeding, weary feet, and he will shoe you with the silver sandals of his grace. Only do but come, and you shall have such joy in your hearts as you have never dreamed of. There shall be a young heaven born within your spirit, which shall grow and increase until it comes to the fulness of bliss.

III. The time has now come for us to dwell upon THE JOY OF THE SERVANTS. They were to be merry, and they were merry, for the music and the dancing which were heard outside could not have proceeded from one person only, there must have been many to join in it, and who should these be but the servants to whom the father gave his commands? They ate, they drank, they danced, they joined in the music. There are many of us here who are the servants of our own heavenly Father ; though we are his children, we delight to be his

servants. Now, whenever a sinner is saved, we have our share of joy. We have joy, first, *in the Father's joy*. They were so glad, because their lord was glad—good servants are always pleased when they see that their master is greatly gratified, and I am sure the Lord's servants are always joyous when they feel that their Lord is well pleased. That servant who went out to the elder brother, showed by his language that he was in sympathy with the father, for he pleaded with the son upon the matter; and when you are in sympathy with God, my dear brother or sister, if the Lord lets you see poor sinners saved you must and will rejoice with him. It will be to you better than finding a purse full of money, or making a great gain in business; yea, nothing in the world can give you more delight than to see some brother of yours or some child of yours made to rejoice in Christ. A mother once beautifully said, "I remember the new and strange emotions which trembled in my breast when as an infant he was first folded to my heart—my first-born child. The thrill of that moment still lingers; but when he was 'born again,' clasped in my arms a 'new creature in Christ Jesus,' my spiritual child, my son in the gospel, pardoned, justified, adopted, saved, for ever saved! Oh! it was the very depth of joy; joy unspeakable! My child was a child of God! The prayers which preceded his birth, which cradled his infancy, which girdled his youth, were answered. My son was Christ's. The weary watchings, the yearning desires, the trembling hopes of years were at rest. Our first-born son was avowedly the Lord's." May every father and mother here know just such joy by having sympathy with God.

But they had sympathy with *the son*. I am sure they rejoiced to see *him* back again, for somehow usually even bad sons have the goodwill of good servants. When young men go away, and are a great grief to their fathers, the servants often stick to them. They will say, "Well, Master John was very inconsiderate and gay, and he vexed his father a great deal, but I should like to see the poor boy back again." Especially is this true of the old servants who have been in the house since the boy was born: they never forget him. And you will find that God's old servants are always glad when they see prodigal children return; they are delighted beyond measure, because they love them after all, notwithstanding their wanderings. Sinner, with all your faults and hardness of heart we do love you, and we should be glad for your sake to see you delivered from eternal ruin and from the wrath of God which now abideth on you, and brought to rejoice in pardoned sin, and acceptance in the Beloved.

We should rejoice for the sinner's sake, but I think the servants rejoiced most of all when *they were the instruments* in the father's hand of blessing the son. Just look at this. The father said to the servants, "Bring forth the best robe." He might have gone to the wardrobe himself with a key and opened it, and brought out the robe himself, but he gave them the pleasure of doing it. When I get my orders from my Lord and Master on the Lord's-day morning to bring forth the best robe, I am delighted indeed. Nothing delights me more than to preach the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, and the substitutionary sacrifice of our exalted Redeemer. "Bring forth the best robe." Why, my Master, I might be content to keep out of heaven if

How wouldst always give me this work to do—to bring forth the best robe and extol and exalt Jesus Christ in the eyes of the people. Then he said, "Put it on him." When our Lord gives us grace to do that there is more joy still. How many times I have brought forth the best robe, but could not put it on you. I have held it up, and expatiated on its excellencies, and pointed to your rags, and said what a delightful thing it would be if I could put it on you, but I could not; but when the heavenly Father, by his divine grace and the power of the Spirit, makes us the means of bringing these treasures into the possession of poor sinners, oh, what joy! I should rejoice to bring forth the ring of the Spirit's sealing work, and the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace, for it is a joy to exhibit these blessings, and a greater joy still to put them upon the poor, returning wanderer. God be thanked for giving his servants so great a pleasure! I would not have dared to describe the Lord's servants as putting on the robe, the ring, and the shoes, but as he has himself done so I am rejoiced to use the Holy Spirit's own language.

How sweet was the command, "Put it on *him*." Yes, put it on the poor trembling, ragged, shivering sinner, "Put it on *him*," even on him, though he can hardly believe such mercy to be possible. "Put it on *him*?" Yes, on *him*. He who was a drunkard, a swearer, an adulterer? Yes, put it on *him*, for he repents. What joy it is when we are enabled by God's commission to throw that glorious mantle over a great sinner. As for the ring, put it on *him*; that is the beauty of it. And the shoes, put them on *him*; that they are for him is the essence of our joy—that such a sinner, and especially when he is one of our own household, should receive these gifts of grace is wonderful! It was most kind of the father to divide the labour of love. One would put on the robe, another the ring, and a third the shoes. Some of my brethren can preach Jesus Christ in his righteousness gloriously, and they put on the best robe; others seem most gifted in dwelling upon the work of the Spirit of God, and they put on the ring: while yet another class are practical divines, and they put on the shoes. I do not mind which I have to do, if I may but have a part in helping to bring to poor sinners those matchless gifts of grace, which at infinite expense the Lord has prepared for those who come back to him. How glad those were who helped to dress him I cannot tell. Meanwhile, another servant was gone off out of doors to bring in the fatted calf, and perhaps two or three were engaged in killing and dressing it, while another was lighting a fire in the kitchen, and preparing the spits for the roast. One laid the table, and another ran to the garden to bring flowers to make wreaths for the room,—I know I should have done that if I had been there. All were happy. All ready to join in the music and dancing. Those who work for the good of sinners are always the gladdest when they are saved. You who pray for them, you who teach them, you who preach to them, you who win them for Christ, you shall share their merriment.

Now, dear brethren, we are told that they "began to be merry," and according to the description it would seem that they were merry indeed, but still they only "began." I see no intimation that they ever left off. "They began to be merry," and as merriment is apt to grow

beyond all bounds when it once starts, who knows what they have come to by this time. The saints begin to be merry now, and they will never cease, but rejoice evermore. On earth all the joy we have is only beginning to be merry, it is up in heaven that they get into full swing. Here our best delight is hardly better than a neap tide at its ebb; there the joy rolls along in the majesty of a full spring tide.

"Oh what rapturous hallelujahs
In our Father's home above!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
O'er the embraces of his love!
Wondrous welcome—God's own welcome,
May the chief of sinners prove.

"Sweet melodious strains ascending,
All around a mighty flood;
Servants, friends, with joy attending—
Oh! the happiness of God!
Grace abounding, all transcending,
Through a Saviour's precious blood."

Let us begin to be merry this morning. But we cannot unless we are labouring for the salvation of others in all ways possible to us. If we have done and are doing that, let us praise and bless the Lord, and rejoice with the reclaimed ones, and let us keep the feast as Jesus would have it kept; for I hope there is no one here of the elder brethren who will be angry and refuse to go in. Let us continue to be merry as long as we live, because the lost are found and the dead are made alive. God grant you to be merry on this account world without end. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xv. 11—32.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—548, 1002, 1004.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ALL FOR JESUS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 29TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Ye serve the Lord Christ."—Colossians iii. 24.

THE gospel does not barely supply us with directions for holy living but furnishes us with reasons for obedience, and tells us where to find the power to obey. Hence in the commencement of this chapter, before the apostle comes to any practical exhortation, he reminds us of our position and privileges. He bids us remember who and what we are as believers in Christ, that we may act accordingly. We are risen with Christ, and therefore our affection should not be set on earthly things; we are dead to the world, and hence we must not, cannot, live in sin. Christ is our life, and therefore we must walk after his example.

The apostle knew right well that the conditions of believers here below are various, and therefore he laid down distinct precepts for each position. Some are masters and others servants, some parents and others children, and in each case the requirements differ; but while he suited the exhortation to each one he proposed a common motive for all; he reminded all believers, whether wives or husbands, children or fathers, servants or masters, that there is another and a better life, whose rewards are worthy of our ambition, whose service should engross all our strength. He bade them have respect to that higher life, for they had been representatively lifted up into the highest heaven in the person of Jesus Christ, and with him their hearts and desires should ever be. He bade them live the life of heaven here below, and order their footsteps, not in accordance with the fleeting things of time, but the enduring realities of eternity. He knew that in so doing the inconveniences of the present would be forgotten in the glories of the future, and the trials of to-day would be more than counterbalanced by the joys of the hereafter.

Our authorised translation is in the indicative, and states the fact,
No. 1,205.

"Ye serve the Lord Christ." Brethren, is it the fact with each of you? To how many in this place can it be truly said, "Ye serve the Lord Christ"? I find it might also, and not incorrectly, be translated in the imperative. "Serve ye the Lord Christ;" in this sense it may be directed to those who have no share in it as a statement of fact. Let us take it in both senses. If we dare to hope that we do serve the Lord Christ, yet let us listen to further exhortation, and serve him still better; let us thank God for the measure of service which he has wrought in us, and let us earnestly ask him to work in us still further to will and to do. But if any of you are not yet included in the sacred band who call Jesus "Master and Lord," then when ye have trusted in his blood, come and yield your whole selves unto him. If, indeed, ye be redeemed from wrath through him, I charge you be not disloyal to the obligations under which you are laid, but from this time forth make it your joy to "serve the Lord Christ."

To me my text is one of the most joyful sentences from which I have ever preached. "Ye serve the Lord Christ." What an exaltation for a slave of Satan to become a servant of Christ! With what exultation do I hail permission to do anything for my Lord! To be blessed by him, to be enriched with priceless gifts from his bounteous hand,—this is lovingkindness; but to be allowed to render tokens of gratitude in return is sweetest of all. Truly, we may say of this condescension, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." By receiving anything from us the Lord has lifted us as beggars from the dunghill, and set us among princes, even the princes of his people. It is a greater honour to serve Christ in the most menial capacity than to occupy the throne of the Cæsars. I speak of honour, I may also dilate upon the happiness of the service of Jesus! It is the purest of pleasures. We long to express our affection for Jesus by acts of zeal. Love pants for expression, and is not obedience the tongue of love? That love is feigned which does not declare itself in some practical form or other, by deeds of kindness, or gifts, or sacrifices, or patient endurance, or hearty praise. Beloved, let us count it an unrivalled honour and an unsurpassed delight to do anything for Jesus. For this service let us be insatiably ambitious, resolved at all costs to show our loyalty to our Prince. To serve us he laid aside his glorious array, and girt about him the garments of a servant; for us he took a basin and towel and stooped to wash his disciples' feet; for us he became obedient to death, even the death of the cross: now, therefore, in our turn, by all the shame he bore, by all the labour he endured, by all the agonies he suffered, let us serve him and him alone for ever.

In handling the subject of Christian service, I shall note three things: first, we serve the Lord Christ *in the common acts of life*; secondly, we serve him *in what are usually called religious acts*, and thirdly, we have learned to serve him, and, I trust, we may do it more and more, *in special acts of direct homage to himself*.

I. First, then "ye serve the Lord Christ" IN THE COMMON ACTS OF LIFE. The fact that our text was addressed to the lowest rather than to the highest in worldly circumstances is very instructive. Paul has been visiting a family, and he has spoken a word to the wife and a word to the husband, he has paid attention to the children, and given

a warning to the father, he has also a message for the master of the house ; but he does not address to either master, mistress, or children, that choice saying which he reserves for servants—"Ye serve the Lord Christ." The Greek word here translated servants, may be rendered "slaves," and though its meaning is not confined to slaves, yet it includes them, and there were many such in the Christian church in Paul's days,—truly converted men and women, who were still held in bondage according to the cruel Roman law. The apostle goes into the kitchen, the cellar, the field, the wine-press, the stable, and he says to his brethren toiling there—"Ye serve the Lord Christ." He whispers in the ear of the aged man who acts as porter at the door, whom he knows to be a devout believer, and this is the secret which he whispers, "Fear not, brother, for despite thy bonds thou servest the Lord Christ." In those hard days, when Paul wrote from Rome to Colosse, many a slave crept out from Cæsar's household by stealth to listen to his gracious words, and poor workpeople gathered around him, and were converted, and as he felt deep sympathy with them he did not merely admonish them to be honest, industrious, conscientious, and obedient, as many a preacher would have done, but he went further, and cheered them in the performance of their duties by assuring them that they served the Lord Jesus, and of him they would receive a reward. He knew their sorrows and their provocations, and therefore presented them with a rich consolation and a stimulus. He exhorted them to act "as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not unto men." This he said to servants, and to no other class in particular. He did not mean thereby that the wife, the husband, the master, and the child might not and did not serve Christ, but he would have us infer that if those did so, whose lot was least distinguished, much more should those do it whose responsibilities and opportunities are so much greater. If my poor servant should serve Jesus, how much more ought I to do it? If those with the least education and means are bound to serve him, how much more should those who have ten talents lay out all for his glory?

My brethren, you see that those to whom Paul spoke were not preachers, nor deacons, nor elders of the church, neither were they magistrates, or persons of influence, they were simple servants, engaged in domestic duties ; but he says of them, "Ye serve the Lord Christ." Though what I have to say bears upon all present, I will keep to the line of thought which this fact naturally suggests.

Those who are in low estate serve the Lord Christ by a *quiet acquiescence in the arrangement of Providence which has placed them where they are*. Every one knows that while the human race exists in its present condition somebody must serve. It is a paradox, but it is also a truth, that if there were no servants we should practically be all servants. There are a thousand offices which, if each person were obliged to perform them for himself, would be exceedingly tedious and unpleasant, but which are now done for us by persons to whom use renders them not at all irksome. As things are at present constituted, there will be poor and there will be rich, there will be servants and there will be masters, and when a man can say, "I have learned in

whatsoever state I am therewith to be content, for I bow me to the providence of my heavenly Father," that man is in his heart serving the Lord Christ. To stand where the Lord places us and keep our position cheerfully has in it the essence of obedience.

We serve the Lord, next, in service, or in any other form of life, *if we exercise the graces of the Holy Spirit* in the discharge of our calling. The servant who is in all things trustworthy, and neither wastes his employer's time nor goods—the servant who does not watch his master's steps, so as to loiter when he is out of sight, but conscientiously renders a fair day's work for his wage, treating his master as he would wish to be treated if their positions were exchanged; such an one, exhibiting truthfulness, gentleness, sobriety, honesty, and industry, serves the Lord Christ as much in his labour as if he were an evangelist or an apostle. He does not preach vocally, but his life is a powerful sermon. He is a standing evidence of the power of religion, an argument which logic cannot overthrow, nor the most cunning sophistry confute. Holy living preaches where the minister cannot enter, it preaches from the nursery to a worldly mother, from the shop to a graceless tradesman, from the workroom to a godless employer. Where our words are denied a hearing, your lives will nevertheless win attention. At the first the gospel was very much spread in the noble families at Rome by means of their servants. They noticed how different they were from other servants, and as they observed their conduct they inquired what this new religion was which so much improved them. Christians *were* Christians then: they made their Lord their first and last object, and surrendered their whole lives to his service, and hence they were a power in all places. The poorest and meanest did not think themselves exempt from the sacred duty of spreading the faith; none, indeed, asked for a discharge in this war. Domestic servants became missionaries to the families in which they resided, and acted as apostles in houses where the apostles could not enter.

We serve Christ in such a position *by displaying the joy of the Lord in our service*. I lay great stress upon this point. Many a soul has been converted to our Lord Jesus by noticing the cheerfulness of poor Christians. If a heathen master had a Christian slave, he noticed how contentedly he accepted his hard toil and hard fare, he saw his countenance beaming with delight, and he even heard him sing for joy. He would naturally want to know the reason of that cheerfulness. Servants had a sorry lot with Roman masters and mistresses; I have seen some of the mere dogholes in which the slave who kept the door found sleeping-quarters in the gay city of Pompeii, yet from such wretched abodes would rise the voice of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and the children would wish to hear them, and the mistresses too. Thus would the truth be spread. The Christian would not join in the general jollity upon heathen festivals, and would be absent from the amphitheatre when all the rest of the family were eager to view the spectacle, but he had a quiet cheerfulness and settled calm of mind which was all his own, and when trouble and distress were in the house he was the general comforter and friend. When he lay sick, and scarce anybody cared for him, he still did not lose heart, and when he

as near to die his joy came to a climax, and he breathed out his soul with a song. Such a servant served the Lord most effectually. I hope there are many in this church who in these better days are rendering equally valuable service in households where the name of Jesus is not revered. We, too, should be doing the like in the circles in which we move. Our holy cheerfulness should be an invitation to our friends to come to Jesus. We shall never bring men to believe in a Master whose servants are unhappy in his service. To toll a knell as an invitation to a wedding feast is most absurd. When we invite men to the banquet of saving grace let us do it with smiling faces. Beloved, let us mingle with the sternness of our integrity and the solemnity of our life-purpose that cheerfulness and joy which are the most natural and the most attractive ornaments of the Christian character.

The true way to serve the Lord in the common acts of life is to *perform them as unto himself*; and this can be done with everything which it is lawful to do. God forbid we should maintain, as some do, a broad, unbending distinction between things secular and religious. This wicked age must, forsooth, have its holy places and its holy days. What is this but a confession that most of its buildings are unholy and its days unholy too. Of heaven it is written, "I saw no temple therein," and we get nearest to the heavenly state when all superstitious notions about sacred places and sacred substances shall be swept away once for all. To a man who lives unto God nothing is secular, everything is sacred. He puts on his workday garment and it is a vestment to him: he sits down to his meal and it is a sacrament; he goes forth to his labour, and therein exercises the office of the priesthood: his breath is incense and his life a sacrifice. He sleeps on the bosom of God, and lives and moves in the divine presence. To draw a hard and fast line and say, "This is sacred and this is secular," is, to my mind, diametrically opposed to the teaching of Christ and the spirit of the gospel. Paul has said, "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself." Peter also saw a sheet let down from heaven in which were all manner of beasts and fourfooted creatures, which he was bidden to kill and eat, and when he refused because they were unclean, he was rebuked by a voice from heaven, saying, "What God hath cleansed that call not thou common." The Lord hath cleansed your houses, my brethren, he has cleansed your bed chambers, your tables, your shops, he has made the bells upon your horses holiness to the Lord, he has made the common pots and pans of your kitchens to be as the bowls before the altar, if ye know what ye are and live according to your high calling. Ye housemaids, ye cooks, ye nurses, ye ploughmen, ye housewives, ye traders, ye sailors, your labour is holy if ye serve the Lord Christ in it, by living unto him as ye ought to live. The sacred has absorbed the secular, the overarching temple of the Lord covers all your houses and your fields.

My brethren, this ennobles life. The bondsman is henceforth free, he serves not man but God; the galley-slave tugs the oar for Jesus, he menial ministers to the Lord. This cheers the darkest shades, or now we no longer complain of the hardness of our lot, but we

rejoice in it, because we bear all for Jesus, and the burden which we carry is his cross, which he himself places on our shoulders. This ensures us a reward for all we do. If in our service we receive but little thanks from man, and if after a life of toil find ourselves but scantily furnished for old age, we will not complain, for our recompense is sure, our reward is in the hand of one who never forgets his servants. There is no unrewarded toil in the service of the Lord Christ, even a cup of cold water he remembers. He who serves Christ shall have it said of him at last, "Well done, good and faithful servant," and in the fulness of his Master's joy, into which he shall enter, he shall forget that for a while he lived unremunerated among the sons of men.

Let this stimulate your zeal, my brethren: if you serve the Lord Christ, serve him well. If you had work to do for her Majesty the Queen you would try to do your best. If she honoured you with her commands you would cheerfully obey them; how much more should you be aroused to diligence by the call of the Infinite Majesty of him who bled for you! Perform your every-day work with a heartiness which nothing else could beget in you. Serve the Lord with gladness, and do all for love of his name.

This I thought most important to bring forward, and though I can not speak upon it as I would, yet I do earnestly urge all of you to remember that piety shines best around the domestic hearth, and that true religion is always best esteemed by unconverted men when they see it in connection with the common-place duties of life. They do not care how beautifully you pray at prayer-meetings; they have very little respect for the excellent addresses you deliver in the Sabbath-school; but to live godly, soberly, righteously, to make other people happy, to be gentle in temper, to be yielding and forgiving, to be strictly upright and honest in your dealings with your fellow men,—this is what the world will read and recognise, and when they see these things in you, the gospel will be commended to them, and they will be the more likely to listen to the truth as it is in Jesus.

II. Secondly, brethren, we ought to serve the Lord Christ in what we more commonly, but incorrectly, call RELIGIOUS ACTIONS. Every professor of religion should have something to do for Jesus Christ. Though the discipline of our church does not turn out of it every one who is an idler, I almost wish it did. I am afraid such a rule would diminish our numbers, but it would materially quicken our energy. Drones in the hive are of very little use as to honey making; they are at the bottom of all the quarrels, but they cannot really benefit the community. God save us from being drones. Let every man who is really redeemed by the blood of Jesus have something to do and do it. I wish I could go round the whole of this company this morning and say, "Brother, do you serve the Lord Christ? Sister, do you the same?" but I will ask conscience to be my deputy, and leave your own hearts to answer the question. Brother, sister, do you really serve Christ, or does it amount to this, that you enjoy hearing, you enjoy singing, and so on, but you do nothing for Jesus? Bestir yourself, dear brother, put out your talent to interest. Your Lord has said, "Occupy till I come." Take heed lest he come and find

your talent buried in the earth, your Lord's money rusting and your satchel rotting in the soil. Let each one be serving Christ always according to his ability.

But supposing that we are serving Christ, as we think, it is well to raise a further question: are we with our whole soul serving *Christ*. For mark you, it is very easy to make a mistake here: we may be working in a legal spirit, and so not serving Christ. No doubt many attend to the outward matters of religion that they may win merit, or that they may prepare themselves for the receipt of the divine blessing. I do not wonder at the zeal and earnestness which some people show; if they hope to get to heaven by their works they ought to be zealous indeed. The legal spirit has a measure of power in it: the lash drives on the slave, the fear of punishment impels man to toil. But from such bondage ye are free, "ye are not under the law, but under grace." Do therefore nothing with the hope of deserving well at the Lord's hands, for this would be serving self. Ye are saved, serve then your Saviour out of gratitude. Work, not to obtain life, but because you have life already, and delight to exercise that life to the honour of him who gave it. Some, I fear, do not serve Christ in what they do, for they go about it as a part of the general routine of their existence. It is the proper thing to go to a place of worship, therefore they go; it is generally expected of persons in their station to teach in the Sunday-school, and they do so accordingly; they reckon that they ought to give a guinea if they see the name of a friend down on the list, therefore they do it. I am afraid that a great deal which is put down as work for Christ is a kind of sleep-walking, done without thought, or heart, or desire to glorify God therein. May the Holy Ghost arouse us out of such mere mechanical acts, and bring us to be in heart and soul the Lord's willing, ardent workers.

Some, I fear, render service in a party spirit. They serve, and they think it is Christ they are serving; but in fact it is their own denomination, or little church. They would be almost vexed to hear of God's being honoured among any other sort of Christians; they hope there will be a revival, but they would like it to be pretty nearly confined to the walls of their own chapel. They serve a clique, not Christ. Their sympathies never go beyond the particular section of the church to which they belong, and they are rather moved by emulation to see their own opinions dominant than by zeal for the glory of God. Oh, brethren, break those bonds if they hold you. We ought to be zealous for the whole truth, and we ought to labour to increase the number of those Christians who hold the gospel in its purity, but still let our jealousy for pure religion never degenerate into bigotry; let us love the whole church more than a part, and Christ best of all.

In more instances still the self-spirit comes in to usurp the place of Jesus. I wonder how large a proportion of our zeal, if it were analysed, could be accounted for by the desire of prominence, the ambition to be thought useful, and the wish to shine among our fellow men. I cannot set up a furnace here and put my own zeal or yours into the crucible just now, but again I ask your conscience to be my deputy to analyse honestly the motive which sways you, and to tell you plainly how far you are serving self and how far you are serving Christ.

We are not always serving Jesus, I fear, when we think we are most doing so, for our main object may be to please our fellow-creatures. Our parents wish us to be active in the church, and therefore we do it. Our friends would not be pleased if we were idle, and therefore we bestir ourselves. From our position we are expected to be engaged in some department of Christian service, and therefore we enter upon it. Brethren, we must rise above this. What we do, whether we teach in the school, or visit the sick, or distribute tracts, or preach the gospel, we must do as unto the Lord alone, and the master motive, which should indeed crush out every other, must be this, "we serve the Lord Christ." Brethren, let others take what they will for their motto, I charge you by the Holy Ghost, write this upon your banners, "We serve the Lord Christ." If any request you to serve this literary coterie or that political faction, or to give your whole attention to some great moral reform, let your answer be, "We serve the Lord Christ." Aid in anything that is good, for whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report, and are for the benefit of mankind, you are bound to countenance, but still your main life-work, your true business, which must absorb your energies and eat you up, is this—"We serve the Lord Christ." They beckon us from this point, crying, "Come over and help us." They call to us from the other corner, "Come and work with us," but our answer must be, "We are an independent brigade, we are already committed to the noblest cause; we are sworn to a Captain who has no rival; we are not able to promise ourselves to any one of you, though wherein you do good we are your allies; Jesus we serve and none else. God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." May God help us to do this evermore!

III. Now I am coming to the last part of my discourse, which to me is the most interesting, and I trust it may be so to you. We serve the Lord Christ IN SPECIAL ACTS DONE TO HIMSELF. I cannot tell how you feel, but I often wish I could do something for my Lord himself personally. I frequently meet with kind souls to whom God has blessed my ministry, and they express their thankfulness to God and their love to me, by aiding the various works committed to my charge, for which I am deeply grateful to them: but now and then a friend says, "I will cheerfully subscribe to your work, but I desire also to show my personal thanks to yourself. What can I do *for you?*" Now, towards those whom we esteem, this is a natural feeling, and in spiritual things there is a similar desire towards our divine Benefactor. Our hearts long to offer somewhat to Jesus, distinctly to Jesus himself. He has gone from us, or we would delight to minister to him of our substance, to make him a feast, to furnish him a chamber, or to wash his feet. How gladly would we lend him our boat, our colt, our guest chamber, or anything we possess. We would watch his every want, and endeavour to forestall it if he were here; but he has gone: are we therefore denied the privilege of rendering personal service to him? I think not. Let it be our pleasant task now to consider what we can do directly and distinctly *for him*.

First, we can *adore our Lord*. We can bow at his feet and worship him as our Lord and our God. We shall do well to exercise our hearts in frequent acts of devotion to the Son of God. I do not mean offering

prayers and petitions, excellent as these are, but holy contemplation, meditation, admiration, thanksgiving, and worship of Jesus. Far be it from us to neglect the adoration of any one person of the adorable Trinity in Unity, that were a grievous sin; but to worship Jesus does not involve forgetfulness of the Father or of the Spirit. Fix your eye on the person of Jesus, view his work on earth, contemplate his holy life and expiatory death. Meditate upon his great love, his dying love, his living love. Follow him from the tomb to Olivet, and from the mountain's brow to heaven's gate and the right hand of the Father. Pay your homage before his throne, blessing, praising, and adoring him. We ought not to be satisfied without special acts of personal thanksgiving, in which we exercise our love and reverence for him who is altogether lovely in our eyes. True, we may be doing nothing for our fellow men while thus occupied, but Jesus is dearer to us than the whole race of men, and it is only his due that we render him when we bow adoringly at his ever-blessed feet.

Then, brethren, when you have adored him in secret you should do the like in public by speaking well of him and extolling him before others, not so much for their good as for Christ's glory. I must confess I enjoy a sermon best in which I have to speak most of my Beloved. If I have to set him forth rather than to exhort you, I feel best pleased. There are other things to be done beside, but this is the sweetest task. I love to spend all my preaching time in making Jesus lovely in man's eyes, in lifting him upon a glorious high throne in the esteem of those who listen to me. Brethren, do this yourselves in your common talk. Make a point of turning the conversation round till it bears on him. Frequently begin a conversation about Jesus and let men know that you glorify him. In such special acts of devotion to his person, I pray you abound.

Next, we should *pray for him*. Do you understand that? Some do not. The psalmist says, "Prayer also shall be made *for him* continually." It is very delightful to pray for sinners and pray for saints, but there should be special prayer for Jesus Christ, for the extension of his kingdom, that he may see of the travail of his soul, and that his second advent may speedily arrive. We should pray for the conversion of those who deny his deity, and those who fall into deadly errors as to his substitutionary sacrifice; we should make earnest supplication for the quickening of the love of Jesus in the hearts of the faithful, and for the turning of the disobedient to the knowledge of the truth. Such prayers should be very frequent with us for his sake, and with an eye to his glory. We pray for this and that, but surely Jesus ought to have a larger measure of our supplications.

Brethren, next to this there should be much *communion with him*. Methinks I hear some one say, "Is that serving him? I call it enjoying him!" Yes, I know it is, and you may take it in which way you will, for he *will* be served. *Let him follow me, and who will serve me?*" So that you will be sure to serve him. He is one of the great

quest. "This do ye
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muning with him. If he attaches so much importance to the outward sign, how much more does he value the inner act of fellowship with himself. The fact is that the head which leans upon his bosom is thereby consecrated to his love, and is rendering him service. The cheek whereon he imprints the kisses of his mouth is doing him its best homage while it receives his best favours. Walk not at a distance from Jesus, or ye will grieve him. Abide in him, and ye will bring forth fruit to him.

Let no day pass without a word with Jesus. You are his spouse,—can you live without a loving word from your husband? You are of his flesh and of his bones,—let unbroken communion be the very habit of your being. Brethren, the Lord's supper is worship rendered to Jesus, and is mainly an act which begins and ends upon him; you commemorate his death, you set forth his flesh and blood; your communion and intercourse with Christ are not so much meant to benefit others, as to spend itself upon him; therefore attend to it for his sake; let your eye be fixed upon him only, and whatever others may think of your raptures and delights in Jesus, however much they may call them emotional and impractical, do you remain content with having done it unto him.

Bear with me while I mention other ways in which you may serve Jesus personally. You may do so by *sitting at his feet and learning of him*, studying the word, and pleading for the Holy Spirit to give you light into its meaning. Martha prepared a feast for him, and our Lord did not blame her, but he gave Mary the preference who sat at his feet. One in the crowd said concerning Christ, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee and the paps that gave thee suck." To administer to his childhood seemed the highest of earthly favours, but Jesus said, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Get you that blessing, hear it from his own lips; study his word, make much of every syllable, try to get at the essential spirit, and do not tarry in the killing letter, and you will then be personally serving him, for as a teacher he is pleased when we are his attentive pupils. This is a sweet way of pleasing the Lord Christ.

Then, brethren, remember if you would serve Christ personally you must *obey him*. "Oh," say you, "I did not think that would be a very choice way of serving him." Listen! "If ye love me, keep my commandments." He has chosen obedience as the special pledge and token of our love. You have said, "I wish I could build a chapel, or support a minister or a missionary out of my own purse." I wish you could, but still Jesus has not selected that as the love token, but he has said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Complete, prayerful, habitual obedience to Christ is the very choicest pledge of affection which we can present to our Lord. May infinite mercy help us to present it.

We may do to Christ personal service next by being willing to *bear reproach* for his sake. When you are willing to take upon yourself the defence of a man's character, to throw yourself so completely into him that the reproaches of them that reproach him fall upon you, you have rendered to that man no mean proof of love. Oh, brother, if when they laugh at you for Christ's sake you clap your hands for very glee to be counted worthy to be ridiculed for him, if you take joyfully

the spoiling of your goods, or the slandering of your character, if you know the meaning of this word, "Rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you," then have you rendered personal service to him whom you love, and you may sit down and be thankful for having been allowed to drink of his cup and to be baptised with his baptism.

Further, you can show personal kindness to Christ by *caring for his church*. The Lord had forgiven Peter, and Peter no doubt wished to do something to prove his love anew. His Lord somewhat vexed him by three times putting to him the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" and when the disciple had protested his love, the Master said to him, "Feed my sheep," and "Feed my lambs." Go then and teach the little children, and instruct those of riper years. What he has taught you teach you to others, and you will be doing service to him. He bids you consider it so, for to you who love him he says, "Feed my sheep."

If you cannot serve with your tongue, there remains another mode of pleasing Jesus. Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and relieve distress of every kind. "But that is not doing service to him." I have the best authority for saying that it is, for "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink. Sick and in prison, and ye visited me. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Actual gifts to the poor, and helps afforded to those who need them, are grateful love tokens to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is not here, but his poor saints are. Any saint is an image of Christ, but a poor saint is the express image of Christ; there is a something more about him than about the rich, in which he is even in detail and circumstances more like his Lord. Do ye then to your Lord's own members what ye would have done to him if he himself were here.

Still, I think that every now and then for Jesus there ought to be a *little special wastefulness of love*. The woman with her alabaster box of very precious ointment would no doubt gladly have joined with the holy ones who ministered to him of the substance. I have no doubt she would very gladly have poured water on his feet when he came into the house weary, or she would have waited at the table when he ate. But all this would not have sufficed her ardent love, she wanted to perform an extraordinary act which should be all for him: she looked out that precious box, she must break that, for she would give him something which she could not afford to every day, in fact, which she never did attempt to give but once in her life. Brothers and sisters, think of something special you can do for Jesus. Let it cost you something, and if it pinch you, so much the better; it will be sweet to bear a pinch for him. Think of something that you could not justify in prudence if you had to sit down and talk it over. Do it for him, not to talk about to others afterwards, nor for others to blazen abroad, but do it for him: and then if they do publish it you need not be angry, for Jesus said "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." Be not

ostentatious, but do not be in such a great worry to hide your work for Jesus, for the knowledge of it may do other people good, and lead them to imitate the deed. Still do it unto Jesus only. I cannot suggest what you shall do; and it would be indelicate for me to attempt to do so. Who would think of suggesting to a wife what she should give to her husband as a special private love token. Oh, no! these things are too choice for others to meddle with, they are secrets between the Lord and his elect, suggestions of personal love which cannot come from without. Do you enquire, "What shall I do my Jesus to praise?" Bring forth the choicest that you have, and offer it when your heart is best attuned and readiest for the giving of it. My whole soul thirsts to be often doing this, for I owe all I have and all I am to Jesus, my Lord. Here stands a man before you who has not one single thing in all the world but what he has received from his Lord; who has not a penny but what is lent him, who is clothed by charity and fed by mercy, a pauper by nature, and yet wealthier than a millionaire, because he lives as a gentleman commoner upon the daily bounty of God in Christ Jesus. Here stands before you an unworthy servant of the best of masters, a poor relation of the most generous of householders; happy to be in such a case. Are there other men and women here who owe all to my Lord? If they do, let it be said of them, "Ye serve the Lord Christ." So let it be said of them while they live, and till they die: what better can they desire? For myself, I am resolved by divine grace more fully to yield my whole body, soul, and spirit to him whose I am, whom I serve. Grace be with you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Colossians iii. iv. 1—6.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 6TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord."—Jeremiah xxiv. 7.

WITH what blindness has sin smitten the heart of man, for man does not know his own Maker! It is implied in the text that in his heart he is ignorant of Jehovah, though in him he lives, and moves, and has his being. What an impotence has sin brought upon the mind of man, since being ignorant of God he is also incapable of finding him out! This also may be most readily gathered from the text. The fact that a promise is made in the covenant that to the chosen shall be given hearts to know the Lord is a clear proof that without the divine teaching, and without the reception of a new heart from the Lord, man not only does not know, but cannot find out his God. Thou boastest of thy intellect, O vain man, but thy foolish heart is darkened so that thou stumblest in the noonday as at midnight. Thou hast eyes, and thou sayest "I see," but thine eyes are closed, thine ears are dull of hearing, and thy heart has waxed gross; and so dull has thy soul become that only he who formed the ear can make thee hear, and only he who fashioned the eye can give thee sight. How can we sufficiently admire the condescension of God, that he should stoop to instruct the heart of man! Man forgets his God, but God does not forget him; though man knows not God, yet God knows him; and, seeing that his powerlessness to grasp divine knowledge lies in his heart, he visits him in grace, and renews the fountain of his strength, and the centre of his nature, by giving him a new heart and a right spirit. The infinitely glorious God might have regarded it as a matter of indifference whether such an insignificant creature as man knew him or not; he might well have said, and it had been consistent with the majesty of his justice to say it, "Seeing that ye do not desire to know me ye shall not perceive me; and inasmuch as ye close your eyes to me ye shall continue in outer darkness; because ye will not glorify me as God your hearts

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shall abide in midnight, I will leave you to your own devices." But the Lord of love said not so to the sons of men, upon whom his heart was set. On the contrary he has made a covenant of mercy on our behalf, and his speech is the reverse of what we might have expected, for he declares in the words of the text, "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am Jehovah."

By this great promise of the text is not merely meant that God will lead the converted to know that there is a God, because that may be known without a new heart. Any man possessed of reason may know that there is a Supreme Being, who created all things and preserves the universe in existence. The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork. The tokens of divine skill and power are so abundant that "The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are already seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." The knowledge intended here is much deeper than that which comes from observation, and only affects the intellect. To know that there is a God is a lower step, which every man takes except the fool who hath said in his heart, "There is no God." The text promises that the favoured ones shall know that God to be Jehovah. So the original text has it, "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am Jehovah;" God leads men to see that the God revealed in Scripture, and manifested in the person of the Lord Jesus, is the God who made heaven and earth. Man fashions for himself a god after his own liking; he makes to himself if not out of wood or stone, yet out of what he calls his own consciousness, or his cultured thought, a deity to his taste, who will not be too severe with his iniquities or deal out strict justice to the impenitent. He rejects God as he is, and elaborates other gods, such as he thinks the Divine One ought to be, and he says concerning these works of his own imagination, "These be thy gods, O Israel." The Holy Spirit, however, when he illuminates their minds, leads us to see that Jehovah is God, and beside him there is none else. He teaches his people to know that the God of heaven and earth is the God of the Bible, a God whose attributes are completely balanced, mercy attended by justice, love accompanied by holiness, grace arrayed in truth, and power linked with tenderness. He is not a God who winks at sin, much less is pleased with it, as the gods of the heathen are supposed to be, but a God who cannot look upon iniquity, and will by no means spare the guilty. This is the great quarrel of the present day between the philosopher and the Christian. The philosopher says, "Yes, a god if you will, but he must be of such a character as I now dogmatically set before you"; but the Christian replies, "Our business is not to invent a god, but to obey the one Lord who is revealed in the Scriptures of truth." The God of Holy Scripture is love, but he is also possessed of justice and severity; he is merciful and gracious, but he is also stern and terrible towards evil; therefore unregenerate hearts say, "We cannot accept such a God as this," and they call him cruel, and I know not what besides. Herein they are idolators, they set up another god and forsake the true God, and it does not alter the case if they plead that they make no graven image, for the first commandment says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The Lord

teaches his people that he is Jehovah, who brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: the Jehovah who smote Pharaoh with plagues, and drowned his hosts in the Red Sea; the Jehovah who led his people through the wilderness, but cast out their enemies from before them with a strong hand and an outstretched arm; the Jehovah that redeemed his people, but chastened them for their iniquities and took vengeance upon their inventions. The God of Sinai even is the selfsame God as the God of Calvary. "I am Jehovah thy God," is his solemn proclamation, and it is well for the soul when it understands and knows that Jehovah, he is the God, yea, Jehovah, he is God alone. When the heart is content to believe in God as he is revealed, and no longer goes about to fashion a deity for itself according to its own fancies and notions, it is a hopeful sign.

The main stress of the promise lies, however, in this: "I will give them a heart to *know me*;" that is, not merely to know that I am, and that I am Jehovah, but to have a personal knowledge of myself. I can scarcely express the idea which I wish to convey to you, but you all know the difference between knowing who a man is, what his character is, and all about him, and knowing the man himself. There are hundreds of people of whom we know a great deal; we are favoured by some prying gentleman or other with stories of how our great men dress, and what they say, what they eat, and when they eat it, and all sorts of minute details of their personal habits: still, despite all this information, we do not know these people, we should speak falsely if we said we did. To know them we must be on speaking terms with them, there must be a mutual recognition, there must be dealings of some kind between us. Now, it is so in the far higher matter of which we now speak. It is not enough to know that our Creator is the Jehovah of the Bible, and that he is perfect in character, and glorious beyond thought; but to know God we must have perceived him, we must have spoken to him, we must have been made at peace with him, we must have lifted up our heart to him, and received communications from him. If you know the Lord your secret is with him, and his secret is with you; he has manifested himself unto you as he does not unto the world. He must have made himself known unto you by the mysterious influences of his Spirit, and because of this you know him. I cannot explain this knowledge, but it is delightful to remember that many of you understand what it means by experience. Is it not sweet to traverse the world discerning God on every side? Your Father ever near. Is it not a blessing to be in trouble and find him helping us; to be in a dilemma and to hear his voice saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it"? To be depressed in spirit, and to feel that his comforts rejoice our souls, to be exulting in joy and to feel that his presence calms and sobers us and keeps us from undue delight in created things. It is inexpressibly honourable and joyful to walk with God as Enoch did, to speak with him as Abraham did of old, as a man speaketh with his friend, or to be hidden in the hollow of his hand, as Moses was in Horeb. This is to know God after the manner of the text. My hearer, do you know God? Have you beheld the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Have you discerned the Father in the Son? Do you see all the attributes of God shining

mildly through the Mediator, toned down to our capacity, lest the effulgence of the Deity should blind our finite sense? Do you know God by going to Jesus as your Saviour? He that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father. "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." If you know Christ and are found in him, then, beloved, you know the Lord, and are among the blessed company who are taught of the Spirit, for flesh and blood have not revealed the Lord unto you.

We will consider our text in the following manner. We will first of all describe *the seat of this knowledge*—"I will give them a heart to know me"; then *the necessity of this knowledge*; then *the excellency of this knowledge*, and lastly *the source of this knowledge*. May the Holy Ghost aid us in speaking upon each topic.

I. THE SEAT OF THIS KNOWLEDGE—"I will give them a heart to know me." Observe that it is not said, "I will give them a head to know me." As I have already said, man's great stumbling-block in coming to God does not lie in his reason; there is a difficulty in his reason, but not the major one. The first and primary impediment to his knowledge of God lies in the affections. Man's heart is set upon that which is evil; consequently he wants a God after his own fashion, who will smile upon sin, or at least tolerate it. The Lord complains in the psalm, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself"; it is the tendency of man to think that God is like himself. The impure in heart cannot conceive of a pure God, and if he could conceive him he would detest rather than worship him. "The pure in heart shall see God," is one of the opening benedictions of the Saviour's ministry, but the impure in heart cannot see God, and cannot therefore know him. The heart is the seat of the blindness; there lies the darkness which beclouds the whole mind. Hence to the heart the light must come, and to the heart that light is promised.

I understand by the fact that the knowledge of God here promised lies in the heart, first, that God renews the heart so that it *adores* the character of God. The understanding perceives that God is just, powerful, faithful, wise, true, gracious, longsuffering, and the like; then the heart being purified admires all these glorious attributes, and adores him because of them. You can in a measure test your knowledge of the Lord by the enquiry,—Do you approve the character of God? Perceiving the God of the Scriptures to be the true God, do you admire him as he reveals himself? I must repeat what I have already said. There are many who have imagined God to be what they would like him to be, and then of course they admire the image which they have set up; but to see God as the Scripture reveals him, especially in his holiness, is a gift of his grace. Have you noted how David sings in the hundred and third psalm, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his *holy name*"? It would have sounded more in accordance with the context to have said his *gracious name*, for he goes on to speak of the Lord's deeds of grace—"who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases"; but that which the Psalmist most admired was the Lord's holiness in all this,—the way in which he could deal mercifully with the guilty, and yet retain his spotless holiness. Holiness is the great terror of the un-

godly, and therefore it is a token of our knowing God in our hearts when we can bless his holy name. How do the angels praise him? Do they sing "Mighty, mighty, mighty, Lord God of Hosts?" or "Bounteous, bounteous, bounteous Creator of the universe?" No; but "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." They adore the whole of God, and God as a whole; holiness means completeness of character, the absence of everything like excess, the presence of everything that is perfection. O my soul, canst thou in some measure see the infinite perfectness of the Lord in all points; and seeing dost thou admire? Dost thou see him as a consuming fire, burning up evil; and dost thou approve him as such? Dost thou see his sovereignty, his hatred of sin, his immutability, his jealousy, and yet admire him? Dost thou indeed delight in even the sterner traits of the divine character, knowing that under all aspects the Lord is good? Then in thee is fulfilled the promise, "I will give them a heart to know me."

The heart-knowledge promised in the covenant of grace means, however, much more than approval: grace enables the renewed heart to take another step and *appropriate* the Lord, saying, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee." All the saved ones cry, "This God is our God for ever and ever; he shall be our guide even unto death." The man who only knows the Lord with his head regards him as anybody's God; or another man's God; but the man who knows the Lord with his heart exclaims with Thomas, "My Lord and my God." By an act of appropriating faith the gracious man cries out, "The Lord is my portion saith my soul," and then in return he dedicates himself to the service of his God; and there is fulfilled in him that other promise of covenant, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Admiration of God leads on to appropriation, and this to something higher still.

All true knowledge of God is attended by *affection* for him. In spiritual language to know God is to love him. "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." "I love the Lord," saith David, "because he hath heard my voice and my supplication." He had been no stranger to the Lord, but had conversed with him in prayer and received tokens of favour, and, therefore, his love overflowed. He cries out in another psalm, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength," and then he goes on to heap up and pack together a host of words of love and praise:—"The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." Where the Lord is fully known he is intensely loved. The spouse first described her beloved as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, and then she cried out, "I am sick of love." At another time after drawing a full-length portrait of her Lord, she could not refrain from exclaiming, "His mouth is most sweet, yea, he is altogether lovely." Such is our love of God when we know him, that we feel bound to glory in him before others. "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad." It is the great passion of the renewed soul to glorify God, whom he knows and loves; knowledge without love would be a powerless thing, but God has joined this knowledge and love together in a sacred wedlock, and they can never be put

asunder. As we love God we know him, and as we know him we love him.

Admiration, appropriation, affection are crowned with *adhesion*. To know a thing by heart is, in our common talk, to know it thoroughly. When a child knows his lesson by heart, we hope that he will not forget it. That which is learned in the head may be unlearned, for our understanding is very fickle and our memory frail, but that which is written upon the heart cannot be erased. Holy Scripture asks, "Can a maid forget her ornaments or a bride her attire?" These she dotes upon, and, therefore, she will not forget them. Can a woman forget her sucking child? No, she cannot, because her knowledge of her child is heart knowledge. Memories of the heart abide when all others depart. A mother's love, a wife's fondness, a sweet child's affection, will come before us even in the last hours of life; when the mind will lose its learning and the hand forget its cunning, the dear names of our beloved ones will linger on our lips; and their sweet faces will be before us even when our eyes are dim with the shadow of approaching death. If we can sing, "O God, my heart is fixed, O my heart is fixed," then the knowledge which it possesses will never be taken away from it. To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, is not a fleeting attainment, but shall abide with us and increase until we know even as we are known. This is not the knowledge which shall vanish away, but that which shall be perfected when the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

Now, beloved friend, have you such a knowledge of God? Do you admire, appropriate, love, and cleave to the Lord your God? Can you hope that you have been taught of the Lord according to that promise, "They shall know me from the least even unto the greatest." Do not say, "I am so little in Israel that I cannot be expected to know." Does not the covenant promise imply that the least must know the Lord as well as the greatest? This blessed knowledge is essential to every Christian, do you possess it? If not, do you desire it? If so, plead for it, and say, "I beseech thee shew me thy glory. Let me know thee as the Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin." He will hear you if you plead for Jesus' sake.

II. This brings us at once to the second point, namely, *THE NECESSITY OF THIS KNOWLEDGE*. If we think a minute we shall see how necessary it is. To know God is a needful preparation for every other true knowledge, because the Lord is the centre of the universe, the basis, the pillar, the essential force, the all in all, the fulness of all things. Not to know God is as if a student should attempt to construct a system of astronomy and be altogether ignorant of the sun, or a mariner should be a stranger to the sea, or a husbandman should not know the existence of seeds. The place which God occupies must be settled in our minds or we shall have no arrangement in our knowledge, and our science will be nothing but a conglomeration of truth and error. You may learn the doctrines of the Bible, but you do not know them truly till you know the God of the doctrines. You may understand the precepts in the letter of them, and the promises in their outward wording, but neither precept nor promise do you truly know until you know the God from whose lips they fell. The knowledge of God is at

once the beginning and the end of wisdom. The ancient sage said, "Man, know thyself." He spake well, but even for this man must first know his God. I venture to say that no man rightly knows himself till he knows his God, because it is by the light and purity of God that we see our own darkness and sinfulness. There must be a perfect model before us before we can discern our own departures from perfection. You must have a standard by which to weigh yourself or you cannot tell whether you are wanting or no: God is the standard, and until a man knows the standard he does not know how far he himself has fallen short of it. The proper study of mankind is God, and that attended to, the next appropriate subject of study is man. We must know God, or our other knowledge may be dangerous to others, and certainly will be hurtful to ourselves; it will puff us up, or load us with responsibilities which we shall not be able to meet. For the highest and most practical purposes, without the knowledge of God, we abide in utter ignorance.

The knowledge of God is necessary to *any real peace of mind*. Suppose a man to be in the world and feel that he is right every way except with regard to God, and as to him he knows nothing. Hear him say, "I go about the world and see many faces which I can recognise, and I perceive many friends upon whom I can trust, but there is a God somewhere, and I know nothing at all about him. Whether he be my friend or my foe I know not." If that individual be thoughtful and intelligent he must suffer unrest in his spirit, because he will say to himself, "Suppose this God should turn out to be a just God, and I should be a breaker of his laws? What a peril hangs over me. How is it possible for me to be at peace till this dreadful ignorance is removed!" The Old Testament Scripture says, "Acquaint now thyself with God and be at peace." There is no peace to the heart while God is unknown. He is the God of peace, and there can be no peace till the soul knows him. Does it not strike you as being most certainly so? To leave this point unknown would be to leave in jeopardy the most vital part of happiness, the hinge upon which our eternal destiny must turn. Are you doing this? or is the Lord known to you?

That this knowledge of God is necessary is clear, for how could it be possible for a man to have spiritual life and yet not to know God? The very first being which a man discerns when he is quickened into spiritual life is the Father of Spirits. His first cry is, "Father, I have sinned," and all his life long he cries, "Abba Father." Prayer is his breath, but he cannot truly pray to an unknown God. Faith is his life, but how shall he believe in him whom he does not know? I cannot imagine such a being as a spiritual man who knows not God, it is a self-evident impossibility—to be of the sons of God and not yet know the Father, to be pressed upon the Father's bosom, to receive the Father's forgiveness, and yet to be an utter stranger to that forgiving God is impossible—it is utterly inconceivable! The knowledge of God is an absolute and necessary concomitant of the spiritual life, without which we cannot see or enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Certainly it is necessary for the spiritual life when fully developed above. In heaven, and not know the King who reigns there! The golden harp in your hand, and not know for whom to sweep its

melodious strings! White robed in glory, and not know the Redeemer in whose blood our robes were washed! Absurd supposition! It cannot be endured for a moment. Sinner, you must know the Lord. If you do not know him you are not a partaker of his grace, but you abide in darkness. Into his heaven you can never enter till he has given you a heart to know him; do not forget this warning, or trifle with it.

III. Our third theme is *THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS KNOWLEDGE*. And here I shall spend a little longer time, and I hope I shall not tire you. I shall not weary those who care more for sense than sound. One of the first effects of knowing God in the soul is that it *turns out our idols*. Paul tells the Galatians in the fourth chapter and eighth verse of his epistle, that it was when they knew not God that they did service unto them which by nature are no gods, but when they knew God, or rather were known of him, they turned from their idols at once. A knowledge of God! O my brethren, it creates an abhorrence of idols, especially of those which have enslaved our own hearts. It seems to us most monstrous that the ancient Greeks and Romans could have worshipped the deities which their poets fabled for them, and yet at this very time, as I have said, men imagine for themselves a god such as they would choose, and then they worship this god of their own fabrication. Only let the Lord reveal himself to the soul; let the heart know the true God, and away these idols go; with loathing are they cast to the moles and to the bats. Get a view of the Jehovah of revelation, shining through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" With holy scorn you pour contempt upon the gods of man's invention, and glory in the living God, the God of Israel. Your hearts burn with the jealousy of Elijah, and flames with indignation against the rivals of the Lord of Hosts, you would take the prophets of Baal and let not one escape, because they have dared to set up "the image of jealousy" in the temple of the Most High, and have seduced the minds of men to pay their worship to the gods that are no God. Beloved, God so enamours the soul of the converted man, so engrosses every spiritual faculty, that he cannot endure an idol, however dear in former times; and if perchance in some backsliding moment an earthly love intrudes, it is because the man has withdrawn his eye from the splendour of the Deity. When once he gets his eye back again to the God of love, then doth Dagon fall before the ark of the Lord, and not so much as the stump thereof is left. Blessed Lord, let us know thee, for then we shall know our idols no more.

The second good effect of the knowledge of God is that it *creates faith* in the soul; to prove which I might give a great many texts, but one will suffice, from Psalm ix. 10, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." We cannot trust an unknown God, but when he reveals himself to us by his Spirit, then to trust him is no longer difficult; it is, indeed, inevitable. Whenever a man does not believe God, it is because he does not know him. If you doubt his willingness to pardon sin you do not know the abundance of his mercy. If you doubt his skill to bring you through your present difficulties you do not know the infinite resources of his wisdom. If you dream that he cannot deliver you in this your time of need you

have closed your eye to the unlimited energy of his power. If you think he has forsaken you, you have failed to know his immutability. Know him, and you must trust him.

Thirdly, this knowledge of God not only creates faith, but creates *good works also*. Turn to 1 John ii. 3, and you read, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments"; regarding it as absolutely certain that wherever there is a knowledge of God there must follow thereupon the keeping of his commandments; and it certainly is so. Know the Lord, and with holy reverence you will obey him. See what a great deal the apostle ascribes to the knowledge of God in Colossians i. 9: "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." What was to be the benefit of this? Let us read on: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." See what a string of excellent graces spring out of our being filled with the knowledge of God, it is a tree which bears twelve manner of fruits. The soul that knows the Lord is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which bringeth forth its fruit in its season. Daniel says (xi. 32), that "The people who do know their God shall be strong and do great exploits," so that courage, valour, and prowess are learned in this sacred school. A heart to know the Lord begets and nurtures every virtue and every grace, and is the basis of the noblest character, the food which feeds grace till it matures into glory.

Brethren, to know God has over us *a transforming power*. Remember how the apostle writes (in 2 Corinthians iii. 18), "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The knowledge of God is the most effectual influence under heaven, for the Spirit works thereby, and by its means we are renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created us. Everything that we learn and know affects our character in some measure, even as the flesh of an animal tastes of its food. A constant sight of any object, good or bad, tells upon us. We heard a German missionary say, last Monday night, that, when he was in Coomassie, the sight of dead bodies and of mangled corpses from week to week so hardened him to it that the horror was almost gone. Every thought which crosses the mind affects it for the better or the worse, every glance is moulding us, every wish fashions the character. A sight of God is the most wonderfully sanctifying influence that can be conceived of. Know God, and you will grow to be like him. Dear hearer, have you beheld this marvellous vision?

The knowledge of God has a further effect. It *causes us to praise him*. Here is a proof text.—"In Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel." Wherever the Lord is known he must be magnified. It is not possible for us to have low thoughts of him, or to give forth mean utterances concerning him, or to act in a miserly way towards his cause, when we practically know him. There are some men whom

we know whose presence renders paltry actions impossible, you feel that you could not act towards them in any but a generous manner. To know them elevates you; you must do the good and the great and the generous thing when they are concerned. So, when once we know God it is much more so, for to know him constrains us to praise him, not only with our lips, but with our lives; it makes us feel that nothing is good enough for him, and we would even die for his name's sake. We wish for a glorious high throne on which he may be exalted above the highest heavens, King of kings and Lord of lords.

The knowledge of God brings *comfort*, and that is a very desirable thing in a world of trouble. What saith the psalmist? "God is known in her palaces for a refuge." Do you know him? Then he is your refuge. Blessed be God, in days of storm we put into this harbour, and in days of battle we fly to this castle, and dwell in this high tower. If you know God you will not be ruffled, or if for a little while you are disturbed, your heart will soon come back to its rest. You will cast your care on him, wait patiently for him, and rejoice in him at all times, and surely it shall be well with you.

To know God also brings a man great honour. I cannot attempt at this time to explain the noble text which I am about to quote. I throw it out as a pleasing theme for meditation. It is the fourteenth verse of the ninety-first psalm. "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name." Think of it—"set on high," and set on high by the Lord himself, and all as the result of knowing the name of the Lord. There is no getting on high and keeping there, no dwelling above the world and sin, no sitting in the heavenlies, no triumphing over death and hell except by knowing God. When we do know him our meditation of him shall be sweet; then shall our head be lifted up above our enemies round about us, our heart shall mount above the cares and sorrows of the world, and our soul shall dwell on high, where our place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks.

One thing more, and that is, the man who knows the Lord will have *usefulness* given him, and to prove that I will quote a passage in 2 Corinthians ii. 14—"Now thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest *the savour of his knowledge* by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish." Do you not see that the apostle knew Christ, and Christ's name was in him as ointment poured forth. The man who knows God has a savour about him, and wherever he goes he will be a power among men; the savour of Christ will come streaming out of him, as incense from a censer filled with glowing coals. Our usefulness very much depends upon our knowledge of God. We cannot teach others of things what we do not know ourselves. If we have no savour in us there cannot be a savour coming out of us. We shall only be a drag upon the church in any position if we are destitute of the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus; but if we are filled with a knowledge of Christ, then the sweet savour of his name will pour forth from us as perfume from the flowers.

Thus I have put together many things upon which we cannot expe-

tiate, but they will make you see how excellent a thing it is to know the Lord in the heart.

IV. Our fourth point is, **THE SOURCE OF THIS KNOWLEDGE.** Upon this I will dwell but briefly. We are clearly taught in the text that it is *a divine work*—"I will give them a heart to know me." None but the Creator can give a man a new heart, the change is too radical for any other hand. It would be hard to give a new eye, or a new arm, but a new heart is still more out of the question. All the preaching, teaching, and reforming in the world cannot do it. The Lord himself must do it. As surely as God made you, God must now make you, or you will never know him.

It is evidently *a work of pure grace*. "I will give them a heart," not "They shall grow into it, or purchase it," but "I will give it to them." He freely gives to whomsoever he wills, according to his own declaration, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy."

It is evidently *a work which is possible*. All things are possible to God, and he says, "I will give it to them." He does not speak of it as a blessing desirable, but unattainable; on the contrary he says, "I will give them a heart to know me." It is *a work which the Lord has covenanted to do*. How many precious passages there are in Holy Writ in which the Lord declares that this shall be done. I have lately read them with much sweetness to my own heart, here are some of them. In Hosea ii. 19, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness and in judgment, and in loving-kindness and in mercies, I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." Then in the eighth chapter of the prophecy of Hosea, in the second verse we read, "Israel shall cry unto me, my God, we know thee." That wonderful passage in Jeremiah xxxi. 32-34, is so nearly reproduced by the apostle in the eighth of the Hebrews that I need only read the New Testament version (Heb. viii. 10-12). "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." So then it is a promised blessing; a blessing all divine, and divinely guaranteed to those with whom Jehovah has entered into covenant.

The sum of my discourse is this. If you have received this heart to know the Lord, bless him every minute of your existence for this choicest of all boons, without which you could not enjoy any other covenant blessing. Never cease to praise the Lord, for he has favoured you above measure in giving you so priceless a blessing.

But suppose you stand in doubt as to whether you do know God, how should you act? Harken to good counsel. Consider your ways, and turn unto the Lord your God, even now. Confess your ignorance, dear friend. A sense of ignorance is the very vestibule of knowledge. Go before God this very day with an acknowledgment that you know nothing. Tell him how ignorant, and blind, and stupid you

are. Confess it all before him. That being done, remember that it is by the knowledge of Christ that you are to be justified: "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." Study the character of Christ, contemplate with eager attention his work and person. See God in Christ Jesus; and when you have so done, cry mightily unto the Lord, saying, "Thou hast given this promise in thy covenant; Lord let it be a promise unto me, and do thou fulfil it. Thou hast said, 'I will give them a heart to know me'; Lord, give me a heart to know thee. 'For this,' he says, 'I will be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.'" Go and inquire of him concerning it. He will give you that heart; he will reveal himself to you, and you shall yet have to bless and praise his holy name, that he has turned you from darkness to light, and from the ignorance of your natural estate unto the true knowledge of his name. God grant it may be so with you this very day. Time flies, we are almost at the end of the year, and some of you still remain ignorant of God. Shall the year return to heaven to accuse you? Let not this blessed Sabbath go until you have thought upon your ways, and turned your steps unto his testimonies. May his Spirit sweetly incline you to seek his face, and he will be known of you. God grant his blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Jeremiah xxxi. 18—37.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—908, 231, 489.

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A SOLEMN IMPEACHMENT OF UNBELIEVERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 13TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."—1 John v. 10.

No doubt if our Lord Jesus were on earth he would find many persons for whom he would pray, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It is no doubt true of many who are living in great sin that they do it ignorantly, not knowing the full measure of their guilt, or its real character in the sight of God. It is the duty of the Christian minister, and indeed of all Christians, to render sins of ignorance impossible by imparting scriptural knowledge; we must let men know what they are doing, and never suffer them to go on in the dark. If they will commit sin, let them at least know what is involved in it, for "that the soul be without knowledge is not good." It is not meet that any man should continue in darkness now that the true light has dawned upon mankind. It is true our testimony will not always be received, for men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil, but our duty remains the same; we are to bear witness of the truth and to be in the hands of God the instruments of convincing the world of the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

The great sin of not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is often spoken of very lightly and in a very trifling spirit, as though it were scarcely any sin at all; yet, according to my text, and, indeed, according to the whole tenor of the Scriptures, unbelief is the giving of God the lie, and what can be worse? I earnestly desire that every unbeliever may see his unbelief at this time in its true colours, and perhaps, as the Spirit of God enables him to see the evil of his past unbelief, he will be so shocked at himself, and horrified at his crime, that he will continue in it no longer, but yield himself to the faith. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, that grace may be given to the unbelieving, that they may now believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

No. 1,207.

When our race had been lost by sin, it was infinite mercy on God's part to provide a way of salvation, and infinite condescension to make that way of salvation suitable to our lost condition. If it had been a salvation which depended upon works, it would have been impossible to us; it would have mocked our sorrow, but could not have relieved it. In abounding mercy God has set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation for sin, and he bids guilty men believe in him as the atoning sacrifice, and see in him the love of God made manifest. He bids sinners lay hold upon eternal life by accepting Jesus Christ by faith as their Saviour. Now, had not man been very vile and grossly wicked at heart, he would have leaped for joy at the proclamation of the gospel, and have believed at once the truth to which God bears witness; but being desperately set on mischief, man does not believe in Jesus Christ, and if you preach Christ to him, and set the crucified One before him, yet still, except where the Holy Spirit works effectually, he remains in his unbelief, refuses to receive the witness of God, and rejects the Redeemer. Now, what I desire to do this morning is to bring every man who is in that condition to look at himself as in a glass, and see clearly what he is doing. I wish to make him feel as he hears this discourse. "Yes, I see what I am doing: by not believing Jesus I am despising the blood of atonement, and I am telling God to his face that he is a liar." It is always well for every man to know exactly what he is at. On the sea of life the oftener we take observations as to our longitude and latitude the better. Many bankruptcies arise from careless trading, and in such cases the traders have no mind to consult their account books, but they go on with their eyes half open, hoping that things will take a turn, which turn is never taken. It is always good for a man to know who he is, what he is, where he is, and whither he is bound. I would plead with the unbeliever, to look well to his position, to see how God regards it, and to judge himself that he be not judged. If I should not seem to speak very tenderly at this time, you must not be astonished. I believe there is such a thing as pitying sinners and comforting them till they consider themselves to be no longer blameworthy, and even regard themselves as unhappy people who deserve sympathy. I talked not long ago with a troubled one, and after much battling I brought her to this point—"There is the way of salvation. Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners, and whosoever believeth in him is saved." She replied, "I cannot believe in him;" and then I came to push of bayonet and said, "Will you then stand up in the sight of Almighty God, and declare to him that you cannot believe him; which of course is the same thing as saying, in other words, that God is a liar! Rise, then, and let me hear you say what is in your heart." She replied most earnestly, "I could not say anything of the kind." My answer was, "But you did say so just now, and by your unbelief you have been saying so for years, and you are practically saying it every moment that you remain in unbelief." That troubled one said to me as she left, "I thank you for not trying to comfort me. I wanted to be faithfully dealt with, and I bless God that you have done so." Now I wish, out of love to the souls of those who do not believe in Jesus, to deal faithfully with them, giving them no comfort, for comfort there is none

for those who believe not; but making them see what their sin is, that they may be ashamed and confounded, and repent of their wicked unbelief. May the Spirit of God make them see that "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."

First we shall see *the sinner's inability to believe dissected*; then, *the nature of his sin detected*; then, *the unbeliever's sin execrated*; and fourthly, *his fate predicted*.

I. FIRST, THE SINNER'S INABILITY TO BELIEVE DISSECTED. He pleads that he cannot believe. He often says this, and quiets his conscience with it. When he is aroused and awakened he declares that he cannot believe in Jesus Christ, and cannot believe God, and goes off to his deadly sleep again. He quotes the Scriptures to back up his excuse, and perhaps reminds us of the words of the Lord Jesus himself—"No man cometh to me except the Father who hath sent me draw him." To which we reply that the words of our Lord are always very weighty with us, and we would not wrest one of them for a moment; but our Lord explains his own words in another place, where he says, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." So then the sinner's inability lies in his will; it is because he will not that he cannot. Let every sinner be assured of this, and let his conscience confirm the truth of the statement. Harken, O unbeliever, you have said, "I cannot believe," but it would be more honest if you had said, "I *will not* believe." The mischief lies there. Your unbelief is your fault, not your misfortune. It is a disease, but it is also a crime: it is a terrible source of misery to you, but it is justly so, for it is an atrocious offence against the God of truth.

Let me take your unbelief to pieces, and show why it is that you cannot believe. The inability of many of you lies in the fact that *you do not care to think about the matter at all*. A great many of you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ because you do not care about your souls, or see the importance of being saved. You give your minds to your business, your pleasure, or your sin: you dream that there is time enough yet to think of heavenly things, and you think them to be of secondary importance. This is the source of a large proportion of ordinary unbelief. Let any man who disbelieves the Bible, for instance, answer this question,—Did you ever candidly read that book with the view of seeing for yourself whether or no it is the book of God? Did you ever sit down seriously to study the evidences of its being the revelation of God? It is very seldom that any infidel can be found who will say "yes" to that question. They rail at what they do not understand, and condemn off-hand what they have never studied. Is this right?

Many, however, say, "Oh, yes, I believe the Bible, I believe it is God's book, I believe the gospel to be God's gospel." Why, then, do you not believe in Jesus? It must be because you do not think the gospel message important enough to be obeyed; and in so doing you are giving God the lie practically, for you tell him that your soul is not so precious as he says it is, neither is your state so perilous as he declares it to be. You are dying: the doctor says, "Here is a medicine which will cure your disease; it is the only medicine that

will save your life, and you will die if you do not take it." Suppose you do not take the medicine, I shall be right in saying that however you may view the matter, you give that physician the lie direct in the most practical manner. You do not say in so many words, "I am not as bad as you say I am." You do not say, "I do not believe in your medicine," but, by refusing to take it, you say so most unmistakeably. The physician will quite understand your action, even if you do not speak a sentence, and, as he sees you die before his eyes, he will feel that your death lies at your own door. In refusing to come to the gospel feast you do as good as tell the Lord that he makes too much of it, that he makes heaven and earth ring with the glory of it, but in your esteem your farm and your merchandise are far more worthy of attention. You by your neglect of the great salvation declare that you are not in any pressing danger, and do not stand in urgent need of a Saviour; you also say that the pardon of sin, the favour of God, and a good hope of heaven are not worthy to be sought first and above all other things, neither is Jesus the chief among ten thousand, nor is his love needful to make you truly happy. In all these points and many others your carelessness gives the Lord the lie.

A second reason of the sinner's inability to believe lies in the fact that *the gospel is true*. "No," you reply, "that is precisely why we would believe it." Yes, but what does Jesus say in John viii. 45? he says, "Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." Strange reason for not believing a statement!—because it is true! Yet there are thousands of individuals whose capacity for believing a lie is enormous, but their ability for accepting truth appears to have gone from them. When religious impostures have arisen the very men who have heard the gospel from their youth up, and have not received it because it is true, have become dupes of imposition at once. The truth did not suit their nature, which was under the dominion of the father of lies, but no sooner was a transparent lie brought under their notice than they leaped at it at once like a fish at a fly. The monstrous credulity of unbelief amazes me! I meet with persons who consider themselves to be bold thinkers and philosophers, and they express their astonishment that I can really believe the things which I preach: but no sooner do I learn from them what their positive creed is, than the astonishment comes to be on my side, and is a thousand times greater than theirs could be. The faith which accepts Christ has but a small throat indeed compared with that credulity which believes for instance in the development of man from a protoplasm—that creed requires the swallow of the great fish which swallowed Jonah entire. A lie ye will believe, but because the gospel is true ye do not believe it. "You give us a bad character," says one. It is your true character. Some of you are so in the habit of accepting no teaching but that which chimes in with your depraved tastes and sceptical notions, that because the gospel is true, and therefore comes across your vitiated tastes, you cannot endure it. If we were to trim it a little, and cut it down, and make it suit you, you would accept it; but in the name of the everlasting God we assure you we will not do it: we dare not do it for God's sake, nor even for your sakes, for to preach to you another gospel would only be to deceive you.

There are persons who do not receive the gospel because *it is despised among men*. The gospel is sneered at by the great ones of the earth, and the mass of mankind ridicule it, and therefore cowards turn their backs upon it. If princes and great men followed after the truth there might be something in it, but are not believers in Jesus generally poor company? Do you not virtually say, "I cannot believe God's witness alone, but I would believe it if a learned professor or a great lord would add his testimony." What did they say in Christ's day? Have any of the rulers believed? The opinions of the rulers were evidently more considered than the witness of the blessed God. We now have a certain class of people who always ask, "Is it fashionable?" and there are others of another class who cautiously inquire, "What do the men in our shop think about it?" They set more store by the judgment of men than by the declarations of God. They will believe their fellow creatures, who are as fallible as themselves, but God they will not believe. Let me tell you that even if you were after a fashion to believe God because his testimony is supported by the great ones of the earth, or by the many around you, it would not be believing God at all, it would at bottom resolve itself into believing the testimony of men. Sinner, this is no small offence, to be ready to accept the verdict of your fellow men, but not ready to accept the declaration of your God.

Many, however, do not receive the gospel because *they are much too proud to believe it*. The gospel is a very humbling thing. It says to the sinner, "Now, sir, you have no merits of your own, and what is more you have no power to obtain merit in the future." The man claims to have been temperate, chaste, honest, and generous, but the gospel says to him, "You have broken God's law, and you are condemned for it." All that you have done was but your duty, and cannot avail to blot out your shortcomings in other respects. "For whoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," so says the book which cannot err (James ii. 10). If you are to be saved, you must be saved as a sinner, or not at all, for Christ has not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. You must be saved through the merits of another, and washed from sin in the precious blood of Jesus; your own works must not have a finger in it, it must be by grace, and grace alone. Of course the proud man cannot believe that; he turns his back upon it in scorn. Why cannot he believe it? Because he will not believe it, he is so proud that it offends him, it goes against the grain, and he will not endure it. Many of you must confess that you do not like the gospel, because it does not leave you room to stow away your pride. If it said to you, "Attend to the sacraments," why, you would be baptised to-morrow and come to the Lord's Table, if that would save you; and if I were allowed to reach that if any man walked barefooted from his house to the Land's End he would be saved, you would start off this afternoon, wet as it is. If there were any great thing for you to do you would do it, but because there is nothing for you to do but to accept what another has done, you will not have it. Your detestable pride is at the bottom of your rejection of free grace. If this is the secret of your inability, does it excuse you? Does it not make your offence the greater?

Another reason why men cannot believe God's testimony concerning Jesus, lies *in the holiness of the gospel*. If the gospel came to them and said, "You can confess your sins and obtain absolution, and then go and sin again," would not that suit many of you? That is the religion for sinful men! Do you think there ever will be a time when such teaching will cease to be popular? It is a most attractive religion the devil himself could invent, and it shews his genius in lying. Confess your sin to a priest, pay a shilling, get absolved, and go away and live as you like till next time. Rub sin off as you go along with a little penance. Human nature rejoices in that religion. But the gospel says to the man, "You must forsake your evil ways. What is more, the very nature that suggests these sins must be changed. You must be born again." The gospel cries, "Repent." Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him. The gospel proclaims Jesus, who saves men *from* their sins, but you do not want that. The impurity of your hearts is that which makes it hard to believe a pure gospel.

O souls, I pray you, look at this truth. When you say, "I cannot believe," it is either because you are too careless, or else because your nature itself is too deceitful and too impure to accept the truth. It would be easy enough to believe if these things were gone. Do the angels find it difficult to believe? Would pure spirits find it difficult to believe? No, your sin lies at the foundation of your unbelief; it is the root which beareth this wormwood. We cannot expect a spendthrift to believe in the excellence of economy, or a vicious man to believe in the pleasures of chastity. Loose men even deny that any one is pure. What an opinion bad men have of all mankind! Why think they so ill of others? Because they judge them by themselves. When a dove flies over a landscape it sees the clear streams and the fields of corn; but when a vulture passes over the same landscape what does it see? A dead horse here and there, a carcass, or a piece of carrion. Everybody sees according to his eyes. A graceless, impure minded man cannot see purity. Christ said to the proud Pharisees, "How can ye believe that receive honour one of another?" Their pride stood in the way; and in every case in which a man declares concerning the Lord Jesus, "I cannot believe" the difficulty is in himself, and not in the facts to be believed, nor in the evidence of those facts. There is one excuse for unbelief, and only one. "How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" That excuse will avail for the heathen, but not for you, for you have heard and read about Jesus, and know the gospel, so that the only excuse that can be accepted is not for you. Of you it must be said, "He that believeth not hath made him a liar."

II. Secondly, I must now come to closer quarters, and describe THE NATURE OF THE SIN OF UNBELIEF, in that it makes God a liar. I will take many forms of it, and show this to be the case.

Those are guilty of this sin who deny that Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Saviour, the Son of God. Out of heaven God himself declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Peter truly said at Pentecost (Acts ii. 22) that Jesus of Nazareth was

"a man approved of God by miracles, and signs, and wonders, which God did by him." God says in many ways "he is my beloved Son," and if you say he is not you make God a liar. That is clear enough.

Some there be who deny his deity. Now, over and over in Scripture we are told that Jesus Christ is "God manifest in the flesh." "The Word was God." "By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible" (Col. i. 16). He is "called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God." The miracles which Christ wrought, and especially his resurrection from the dead, all prove his deity, the Father bearing witness that he is his equal and his fellow. When a man says that Jesus is not God, and the Father says he is, the lie direct is given; but, as I believe there are very few of that kind of unbelievers here, I will leave such persons and pass on.

A poor trembling, weeping sinner comes to me, and amongst other things he says, "My sins are so great, that I do not believe they can be pardoned." I meet him thus. God says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "But, Sir, my sin is very great indeed." "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "But my transgressions have been exceedingly aggravated." "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "Sir, I cannot believe it." Stand up, then, and tell the Lord so in the plainest manner,—“O God, thou hast said thou wilt abundantly pardon, but it is a lie.” I challenge you to make that avowal outright, for you are making it in your hearts. It is idle to deny it, for it is so. God says, "I will and I can pardon," and you say he cannot—what is that but accusing the Lord of falsehood?

Another will say, "Oh, but my heart is so hard I cannot believe in the power of God to make a new man of me, and deliver me from the love of sin." Yet God declares in his word, "A new heart also will I give them, and a new spirit will I put within them. I will take away the heart of stone out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh." That is what God says. "It cannot be," say you. Very well, then, do not deny it, you give God the lie. God says, "I can;" you say he cannot. There is your position.

In many there exists a doubt about the willingness of God to save. They say, "I believe that the blood of Jesus Christ does blot out sin, but is he willing to pardon me?" Now, listen to what Jehovah says, for he says it with an oath, and to me it is a very startling thing that God should swear, he swears by himself, because he can swear by no greater. Mark that! "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he turn unto me and live." Over and over again, in all sorts of shapes, he gives us assurance that he delighteth in mercy. Now, then, sinner, if you say God is unwilling, and Christ is unwilling, and yet the Lord swears that he is willing, and Christ dies to prove it—what, then, is your unbelief? I hardly like to utter what I feel I must say—you do deliberately charge God with perjury, and what could the greatest blasphemer out of hell,

or the blackest devil in hell do more than that? That is exactly what you have done, and are doing now.

"Alas," cries one, "my ground for doubt is deeper, I hear that God can pardon, regenerate, and all that, and I believe it, but then I cannot see that any of this is for me. I do not see that these things are sent for me." Listen, then, to what God says, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, let him come buy wine and milk." You adroitly reply, "But I do not thirst." More shame for you then! Listen again—"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "But I do not labour." Do not labour? How do you get your living? I am sorry for you if you are such a lazy man that you have no labour. That text includes every labouring man and every heavy laden man under heaven. Listen yet again, "Whosoever will, let him come." Does not that invite every living man who is willing to come? If you say, "I am not willing," then I leave you, for you confess that you are unwilling to be saved, unwilling to be reconciled to God, and that is exactly what I am trying to prove:—you cannot believe, because you are unwilling to do so. On your own head be your blood. I do not know what more I can say to you; you must be mad to be willing to incur the flames of hell and the wrath of God for ever. It is not for me to comfort you when you are in such a condition as that: if you choose your own destruction, why, so must it be. Yet hear me once again. Jesus has said to his disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." Are you a creature? "Yes, I am a creature." Well, man, God has put it as plain as it can be put, that the gospel is to be preached to you, and, therefore, it has a relation to you. Would God send it to you to tantalise you? When you say, "It is not for me," you give God the lie. He says it is for "every creature;" and you know you are a creature, how then dare you say it is not for you? In speaking thus, you accuse the Lord of trifling with you and mocking you.

"Well," says one, "but I cannot see how simply trusting in Christ, and believing God's witness of him, would save my soul." My dear man, are you never to believe anything but what you can see, and how are you to see this thing till you have tried it? A physician says "that medicine will heal you." The patient replies, "I want to see that it does heal me before I take it." The man is a fool, and so are you if that is how you trifle with God. You must believe the gospel on the evidence of God, and not otherwise, or your faith is not faith in God at all. The faith which is commanded in the gospel is faith in the record which God has given concerning his Son, a faith which takes God at his word. Believe, then, on the Lord Jesus Christ and you have believed God to be true: refuse to trust in Jesus Christ, unless you get some other evidence beyond the witness of God, and you have practically said that God's testimony is not enough, that is to say, you have made God a liar.

Many a time I have heard men say, "Oh, but I cannot believe it, it seems so wonderful." Is not that why you should believe it? What should come from the glorious Lord but that which is wonderful? He is glorious in holiness, fearful in praise, doing wonders.

Another cries out "that it is too good to be true." Ah, poor soul, but have you never read, "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are my ways above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts"? A less salvation would not avail for you, nor glorify God. Some feel that the gospel is too simple. They want a more complicated system than—"believe and live." How can it be too simple for finite minds like ours? Then I have heard them turn round and say, "It is too mysterious," and yet after all where is this mystery? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." What can be more plain than that? Anyhow, dear friends, let me say to you, whether it is a mystery or not, God bears witness to it, and if you do not believe it you make God a liar. Whether you think it too simple, or too good, or too wonderful, or too anything, you must either believe God or make him a liar, there is no third course; for, be it simple or mysterious, wonderful or commonplace, the Lord asserts it to be true, and if you refuse his witness you make him a liar, and must take the consequences.

III. And now I pray the Holy Spirit to rest upon my words while I treat for a few minutes upon the third most awful point, namely, **THE EXECRATION OF THIS SIN.** To disbelieve God is a sin indeed! It was the mother sin of all, the door by which all other evil came into the world. The devil whispered in the ear of mother Eve, "Yea, hath God said?" That insinuated doubt commenced our fall; and when that had tarnished the brightness of her intellect, the fiend added, "Ye shall not surely die"—giving God the lie direct; when she believed him, and her husband joined her in it, our ruin was complete. Unbelief of God turned our race out of Eden, and in consequence we are born in sore travail, and plough the ground with toil. Oh, accursed unbelief! It is time thou wert hung up on a gallows high as that of Haman! Alas, that any man should hug thee to his heart! Thou destroyer of our race, thou art loathsome indeed! When the children of Israel were in the wilderness journeying towards Canaan, how was it that so many graves were digged in the desert, and that out of six hundred thousand footmen who came out of Egypt only two survived to enter the promised land? Whoslew all these? The inspired apostle tells us, "They could not enter in because of unbelief." Go ye at this day to Jerusalem, look beneath the buildings of the modern town, and mark the excavations which reveal the utter ruin of the holy city. See how fully the prophecy was fulfilled that not one stone should remain upon another. Stand upon the steepes of Zion and ask, "Who destroyed this fair city? Who burned her holy and beautiful house with fire? She was beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, who cast her down to the dust, and why? The palaces of David and Solomon are overthrown, and the ploughshare has been driven over their foundations—why all this? Why was the siege of Jerusalem the most bloody and horrible in all history?" It was because the Jews rejected the Messiah, and would not believe the testimony of the living God. O, accursed unbelief! It spits its venom against the holy God, and he cannot but abhor it. How can the absolutely true submit to be charged with falsehood? This sin of making God a liar I do pray you look at it very solemnly, for it is a stab at God himself.

What is it that would most easily provoke yourself? If a person stole your goods, if he smote you in your person, if he injured you in business, you might bear it patiently, but when a man tells you to your face that he cannot believe you, the insult is acutely felt. You are not truthful if you can be content to be called a liar. Nothing stings like it: it is the unkindest cut of all. Oh, do not tell me that you find it difficult to believe my word, for that will cut me to the quick; yet would I a thousand times rather have you treat me thus than offer the same insult to the Lord my God.

Then, remember, this unbelief insults God on a very tender point. He comes to the guilty sinner and says, "I am ready to forgive." The sinner says, "I do not believe thee." "Hear me," says the Lord, "What proof do you ask? See, I have given my only-begotten Son, he has died upon the tree to save sinners." "Still I do not believe thee," says the unbeliever. Now, what further evidence can be given? Infinite mercy has gone its utmost length in giving the Saviour to bleed and die: God has laid bare his inmost heart in the wounds of his dying Son, and still he is not believed. Surely, man has reached the climax of enmity to God in this: nothing proves the utter baseness of man so much as this refusal to believe his God, and nothing proves so much the greatness of almighty grace as that God should after all this condescend to work faith in a heart so depraved. O miracle of sin! O greater miracle of love!

I would have you recollect that you are not only giving God the lie once or twice, but you deny what he has over and over again declared. To tell a man that he is a liar once is a great insult, but if he continues to asseverate the truth and you still contradict him, the provocation gathers force. If the man be perfectly truthful, it is a piece of wickedness on your part to refuse him credence when he repeats his evidence again and again: but the Lord has gone further than repeating his word, he has sworn it, and yet you will not believe him. I pray you remember that you are in the presence of God at this very moment, and that the Lord is now looking right into your heart, and sees clearly that in your inmost soul your unbelief is saying to him, "O God, the maker of heaven and earth, thou art a liar. O God, who gave thy Son to die, I do believe that fact, but I will not even now trust thee. I do not believe in thy power or willingness to pardon me, though thy word very clearly declares thee to be both able and willing. Thou hast promised to forgive all who in thy Son believe, but I cannot believe. Thou art ready now at once to put away sin from every man that believes thy witness with regard to Christ, but I do not believe thy witness; thou liest." I know you shudder at such sentiments, and there is good need that you should; but why do you continue to act upon them? Did I not hear some one say, "Ah, sir, I have been *trying to believe* for years." Terrible words! They make the case still worse. Imagine that after I had made a statement, a man should declare that he did not believe me, in fact, he could not believe me though he would like to do so. I should feel aggrieved certainly; but it would make matters worse if he added, "In fact, I have been for years trying to believe you, and I cannot do it." What does he mean by that? What can he mean but

that I am so incorrigibly false, and such a confirmed liar, that though he would like to give me some credit, he really cannot do it? With all the effort he can make in my favour, he finds it quite beyond his power to believe me? Now, a man who says, "I have been trying to believe in God," in reality says just that with regard to the Most High. How idle is it to talk of trying to believe! If a statement is true, a right judgment believes it, not of choice, but because the evidence commands faith. The *trying* lies in the other direction: men do not want to believe the truth, therefore they are careless and negligent, they raise quibbles and questions, they demand signs and wonders, and feelings, and impressions; they struggle against the evidence, they shut out the light. In you who believe the Bible to be God's word, and yet are unbelievers, it is evidently so; for if Jesus be the Saviour why do you not believe him? The talk about trying to believe is a mere pretence. But whether pretence or no, let me remind you that there is no text in the Bible which says, "Try and believe," but it says "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." He is the Son of God, he has proved it by his miracles, he died to save sinners, therefore trust him; he deserves implicit trust and child-like confidence. Will you refuse him these? Then you have maligned his character and given him the lie.

IV. I shall leave this matter when I have, with a heavy burden on my soul, said a few words upon THE FATE OF THE UNBELIEVER. If this man continues to say he cannot believe God, and that Christ is not to be trusted, what will happen to him? I wonder what the angels think must befall a being who calls God a liar. They see his glory, and as they see it they veil their faces, and cry, "Holy, holy, holy;" what horror would they feel at the idea of making God untrue! The saints in heaven when they see the glory of God fall down on their faces and adore him. Ask them what they think must happen to those who persist in calling God a liar, and a liar in the matter of his mercy to rebels through Jesus Christ. As for me, I cannot conceive any punishment too severe for final unbelief. Only this I know, it is written, "He that believeth not shall be damned." May you never know what that means, but you will know it as sure as you live if you continue in unbelief. God is not a liar, but if he does not damn the man who dies an unbeliever he will be; and therefore depend upon it he will do it. He has said, "He that believeth not shall be damned:" if he be false he may let you escape, but if he be true he will cast you into hell. There is nothing else before you. The other day an enquirer said to me, "I cannot believe," and I gave him no answer but this—"then you must be damned." Had I nothing else to say? No, nothing else; I had no comforts to offer, no hopes to present to an unbeliever. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." There is an honest intolerance about these words of our Lord; he does not stammer and hesitate and say, "I fear some ill may occur to you;" but he says outright that you will be damned. Nothing on earth or in heaven can save you except you believe in Jesus. You may knock at a thousand doors, and you may cry, and pray, and groan, and agonise, and sweat, ay, even to drops of blood, but there is only one door to

heaven, and that door is faith in Jesus Christ. If you will not enter by that door God himself will not open another. God has been pleased to empty out the infinite mercy of his heart into the person of his dear Son, and he cries, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely": but, if Jesus be rejected by you, and God's witness about him be refused, do not look for any other help. Think you that God has another son who will die for you? You would not believe in him if he had. Do you think he will alter the whole plan of salvation and the covenant of grace, and reverse the purposes of his wisdom to gratify your wicked whims? That were to make him an accomplice in your wickedness and a patron of your insolence. Believe me, he will keep his word, and if you believe not in Christ, you shall be utterly ashamed at the last great day.

The last word I have to say is this, not only will the unbeliever be lost, but he will be lost by his unbelief. Thus saith the Lord, "He that believeth not is condemned already." Why? "Because he hath not believed on the Son of God." Has he not committed a great deal else that will condemn him? Oh, yes, a thousand other sins are upon him, but justice looks for the most flagrant offence, that it may be written as a superscription over his condemned head, and it selects this monster sin and writes "*condemned, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.*" When the Spirit of God came into the world to convince men of sin, he began by convincing them of the greatest of all. Which did he choose as the most glaring? "Of sin because they believed not on me." I am only telling you what I find in the Scriptures. Certain brethren will say, "This sermon is not orthodox." I care nothing for their criticism: what I have advanced is God's word, and God's word against any man's word all the world over. His word is sharper than a two-edged sword, and I pray him to make it cut to your very marrow this morning,—to wound and kill that afterwards Christ may make alive. If any one of you should be finally cast into the prison of despair, to suffer in hell the wrath of God, the accusation which will appear over your condemned cell will run thus, "This man knew the gospel to be true, and yet he would not believe it." That thought will torture you with a vengeance, "I am condemned because I believed not the truth, because I made my God a liar, because I trusted not in Christ. He told me it would be so, and it is so. This is the sting of it all, that for my unbelief I am justly left to perish." Oh, dear hearers, belie the Lord not. By your reason which is yet left to you, by your love to yourselves, by heaven and by hell, by the bleeding wounds of Jesus, and by the truth of God, I entreat you accept Jesus. May the Holy Ghost go with my entreaties that your souls may relent, that your stony hearts may melt before the cross, and you may receive Jesus Christ to be your all in all this day. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John v.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—485, 600, 483.

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INFALLIBILITY—WHERE TO FIND IT AND HOW TO
USE IT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 20TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“It is written.”—Matthew iv. 4.

THOUGHTFUL minds anxiously desire some fixed point of belief. The old philosopher wanted a fulcrum for his lever, and believed that if he could only obtain it he could move the world. It is uncomfortable to be always at sea ; we would fain discover *terra firma*, and plant our foot upon a rock. We cannot rest till we have found out something which is certain, sure, settled, decided, and no longer to be questioned. Many a mind has peered into the hazy region of rationalism, and has seen nothing before it but perpetual mist and fog, and, shivering with the cold chill of those arctic regions of scepticism, it has yearned for a clearer light, a warmer guide, a more tangible belief. This yearning has driven men into strange beliefs. Satan, seeing their ravenous hunger, has made them accept a stone for bread. Many have held, and still do hold, that it is possible to find your infallible foundation in the Pope of Rome. I do not wonder that they would rather have an infallible man than be altogether without a standard of truth ; yet is it so monstrous that men should believe in papal infallibility, that did they not themselves avow it we should think it most insulting to accuse them of it. How any mind can by any possible contortion twist itself into a posture in which it will be capable of accepting such a belief is one of the mysteries of manhood. Why, the popes err in trifles, how much more in great matters? In Disraeli's “Curiosities of Literature” is the following amusing incident, under the head of “Errata” :—“One of the most egregious of all literary blunders is that of the edition of the Vulgate, by Sixtus V. His Holiness carefully superintended every sheet as it passed through the press ; and, to the amazement of all the world, the work remained without a rival—it swarmed with errata ! A multitude of scraps were
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printed to paste over the erroneous passages, in order to give the true text. The book makes a whimsical appearance with these patches; and the heretics exulted in this demonstration of papal infallibility! The copies were called in, and violent attempts made to suppress it; a few still remain for the raptures of biblical collectors; at a late sale the Bible of Sixtus V. fetched above sixty guineas—not too much for a mere book of blunders! The world was highly amused at the bull of the editorial pope prefixed to the first volume, which excommunicates all printers who in reprinting the work should make any *alteration* in the text! The notion of infallibility residing in mortal man is worthy of a madhouse, and scarcely deserves to be seriously discussed. You can scarcely read a page of such history as even Catholics admit to be authentic without discovering that popes have been men, and not gods, and their bulls have been as blundering and erroneous as the decrees of worldly princes. So long as a clear understanding remains to a man he cannot repose in the imaginary infallibility of a priest.

Others, however, linger hopefully around the idea of an infallible church. They believe in the judgment of general councils, and hope there to find the rock of certainty. Apparently this is more easy, for in the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom, but in reality it is quite as preposterous; for if you mass together a number of men, each one of whom is fallible, it is clear that you are no nearer infallibility. It is quite as easy to believe that *one* man is inspired as that five or six hundred are so. The fact is that churches have made mistakes as well as individual men, and have fallen into grievous errors both in practice and doctrine. Look at the churches of Galatia, Corinth, Laodicea, Sardis, and so on; nay, we find that the first disciples of our Lord, who made up the truly primitive and apostolic church, were not infallible, they made a great mistake about a simple saying of our Lord. He said concerning John, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" "Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" Even the apostles themselves could blunder, and did blunder. They were infallible in what they wrote when they were under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but at no other time. Yet, brethren, I marvel not that in the sore distress to which the mind is often brought, it is found better to believe in an infallible church than to be left to mere reason, to be tossed to and fro, a desolate waif, driven by ever changeful winds over the awful leagues of questionings which are found in the restless ocean of unbelief. Longing as I do for a sure foundation, and rejecting both popes and councils, where shall I look?

We have a more sure word of testimony, a rock of truth upon which we rest, for our infallible standard lies in, "It is written." The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, is our religion. Of this inspired Book we say—

"This is the judge that ends the strife
When wit and reason fail."

It is said that it is hard to be understood, but it is not so to those who seek the guidance of the Spirit of God. There are in it great

truths which are above our comprehension, placed there on purpose to let us see how shallow are our finite minds, but concerning vital and fundamental points the Bible is not hard to be understood, neither is there any excuse for the multitudes of errors which men pretend to have gathered from it. A babe in grace taught by the Spirit of God may know the mind of the Lord concerning salvation, and find its way to heaven by the guidance of the word alone. But be it profound or simple, that is not the question; it is the word of God, and is pure, unerring truth. Here is infallibility, and nowhere else.

I wish to speak this morning upon this grand, infallible book, which is our sole court of appeal: and I desire to speak especially to the young converts who during the last few days have found the Saviour, for by them this book must be used as the sword of the Spirit in the spiritual conflicts which await them. I would zealously exhort them to take to themselves this part of the whole armour of God, that they may be able to resist the great enemy of their souls.

"It is written." I shall commend this unfailing weapon to the use of our young soldiers by noting that *this is our Champion's own weapon*; secondly, I shall urge them to note *to what uses he turned this weapon*; and, thirdly, we shall watch him to see *how he handled it*.

I. I commend to every Christian here the constant use of the infallible word, because IT WAS OUR CHAMPION'S CHOSEN WEAPON when he was assailed by Satan in the wilderness. *He had a great choice of weapons with which to fight with Satan, but he took none but this sword of the Spirit—"It is written."* Our Lord might have overcome Satan by angelic force. He had only to pray to his Father and he would presently have sent him twelve legions of angels, against whose mighty rush the arch-fiend could not have stood for a single moment. If our Lord had but exercised his godhead, a single word would have sent the tempter back to his infernal den. But instead of power angelic or divine he used, "It is written"; thus teaching his church that she is never to call in the aid of force, or use the carnal weapon, but must trust alone in the omnipotence which dwells in the sure word of testimony. This is our battle-axe and weapon of war. The patronages or the constraints of civil power are not for us; neither dare we use either bribes or threats to make men Christians: a spiritual kingdom must be set up and supported by spiritual means only.

Our Lord might have defeated the tempter by unveiling his own glory. The brightness of the divine majesty was hidden within the humility of his manhood, and if he had lifted the veil for a moment the fiend would have been as utterly confounded as bats and owls when the sun blazes in their faces. But Jesus deigned still to conceal his excellent majesty, and only to defend himself with "It is written."

Our Master might also have assailed Satan with rhetoric and logic. Why did he not discuss the points with him as they arose? Here were three different propositions to be discussed, but our Lord confined himself to the one argument, "It is written." Now, beloved, if our Lord and Master, with all the choice of weapons which he might have had, nevertheless selected this true Jerusalem blade of the Word of God, let us not hesitate for a moment, but grasp and hold fast this one, only weapon of the saints in all times. Cast away the wooden

sword of carnal reasoning ; trust not in human eloquence, but arm yourselves with the solemn declarations of God, who cannot lie, and ye need not fear Satan and all his hosts. Jesus, we may be sure, selected the best weapon. What was best for him is best for you.

This weapon, it is to be noted, our Lord *used at the outset of his career*. He had not yet come into the public ministry, but, if I may use the expression, while his young hand was yet untried in public warfare, he grasped at once the weapon ready forged for him, and boldly said "It is written." You young Christians lately converted have probably already been tempted, or ere long you will be, for I remember that the very first week after I found the Saviour I was subjected to a very furious spiritual temptation, and I should not wonder if the like happens to you. Now, I charge you do as Jesus did, and grasp firmly—"It is written." It is the child's weapon as truly as it is the defence of the strong man. If a believer were as tall as Goliath of Gath, he need have no better sword than this, and, if he be a mere pigmy in the things of God, this sword will equally befit his hand and be equally effectual for offence or defence. What a mercy it is for you, young Christian, that you have not to argue but to believe, not to invent but to accept. You have only to turn over your Bibles, find a text, and hurl that at Satan, like a stone from David's sling, and you will win the battle. "It is written," and what is written is infallible; here is your strength in argument. "It is written;" God has said it; that is enough. O blessed sword and shield which the little child can use to purpose, fit also for the illiterate and simple-hearted, giving might to the feeble-minded, and conquest to the weak.

Note next, that as Christ chose this weapon out of all others, and used it in his earliest conflict, so, too, *he used it when no man was near*. The value of Holy Scripture is not alone seen in public teaching or striving for the truth, its still small voice is equally powerful when the servant of the Lord is enduring personal trial in the lone wilderness. The severest struggles of a true Christian are usually unknown to any but himself. Not in the family do we meet the most subtle temptations, but in the closet; not in the shop so much as in the recesses of our own spirit do we wrestle with principalities and powers. For these dread duels, "It is written" is the best sword and shield. Scripture to convince another man is good; but Scripture is most required to console, defend, and sanctify our own soul. You must know how to use the Bible alone, and understand how to meet the subtlest of foes with it; for there is a real and personal devil, as most Christians know by experience, for they have stood foot to foot with him, and known his keen suggestions, horrible insinuations, blasphemous assertions, and fiendish accusations. We have been assailed by thoughts which came from a mind more vigorous, more experienced, and more subtle than our own, and for these there is but one defence—the infallible "It is written." Conflicts have taken place full many a time between God's servants and Satan which are more notable in the unpublished annals of the sacred history which the Lord recordeth, than the bravest deeds of ancient heroes whom men praise in their national songs. He is not the only conqueror who is saluted with blast of trumpet, and whose statue stands in the public square; there are victors who have

fought with angels and prevailed, whose prowess even Lucifer must grimly own. These all ascribe their victories to the grace which taught them how to use the infallible word of the Lord. Dear friend, you must have "It is written" ready by your side at all times. Some, when a spiritual conflict begins, run to a friend for help; I do not condemn the practice, but it would be much better if they turned to the Lord and his sure promise. Some at the first onslaught are ready to give up all hope. Do not act in so dastardly a manner; seek grace to play the man. You must fight if you are to enter into heaven; look to your weapon, it cannot bend or grow blunt, wield it boldly and plunge it into the heart of your enemy. "It is written" will cut through soul and spirit, and wound the old dragon himself.

Note, that *our Lord used this weapon under the most trying circumstances*, but he found it to be sufficient for his need. He was alone; no disciple was there to sympathise, but the word was the man of his right hand, the Scripture communed with him. He was hungry, for he had fasted forty days and nights, and hunger is a sharp pain, and oftentimes the spirits sink when the body is in want of food; yet "It is written" held the wolf of hunger at bay; the word fed the champion with such meat as not only removed all faintness, but made him mighty in spirit. He was placed by his adversary in a position of great danger, high on the pinnacle of the lofty house of the Lord, yet there he stood, and needed no surer foothold than that which the promises of the Lord supplied him. "It is written," enabled him to look down from the dizzy height and baffle the tempter still. He was placed also where the kingdoms of the world were stretched beneath his feet, a matchless panorama which has full often dazzled great men's eyes and driven them onward to destruction; but "It is written" swept aside the snares of ambition and laughed at the fascination of power. Or in the desert, or on the temple, or on an exceedingly high mountain, no change in his mode of warfare was required; the infallible "It is written" availed in every position in which he found himself, and so shall it be with us.

Earnestly do I commend the word of God to you who have lately enlisted beneath the banner of my Lord. As David said of Goliath's sword, "there is none like it," even so say I of the Holy Scriptures. Our Lord was tempted in all points like as we are, and therein he sympathises with us, but he resisted the temptations, and therein he is our example; we must follow him fully if we would share his triumphs.

Observe that our Saviour *continued to use his one defence*, although his adversary frequently shifted his point of attack. Error has many forms, truth is one. The devil tempted him to distrust, but that dart was caught upon the shield of "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live." The enemy aimed a blow at him from the side of presumption, tempting him to cast himself down from the temple; but how terribly did that two-edged sword fall down upon the head of the fiend, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." The next impudent blow was levelled at our Lord with the intent of bringing him to his knee—"Fall down and worship me;" but it was

met and returned with crushing force by—"It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." This smote leviathan to the heart. This weapon is good at all points; good for defence, and for attack, to guard our whole manhood or to strike through the joints and marrow of the foe. Like the seraph's sword at Eden's gate, it turns every way. You cannot be in a condition which the word of God has not provided for; it has as many faces and eyes as providence itself. You will find it unfailing in all periods of your life, in all circumstances, in all companies, in all trials, and under all difficulties. Were it fallible it would be useless in emergencies, but its unerring truth renders it precious beyond all price to the soldiers of the cross.

I commend to you, then, the hiding of God's word in your heart, the pondering of it in your minds. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Be rooted and grounded, and established in its teaching, and saturated with its spirit. To me it is an intense joy to search diligently in my Father's book of grace. It grows upon me daily. It was written by inspiration in old times, but I have found while feeding upon it, that not only *was* it inspired when written, but it is so still. It is not a mere historic document, it is a letter fresh from the pen of God to me. It is not a sermon once delivered and ended; it speaks still. It is not a flower dried and put by in the *hortus siccus*, with its beauty clouded and its perfume evaporated; but it is a fresh blooming flower in God's garden, as fragrant and as fair as when he planted it. I look not upon the Scriptures as a harp which once was played by skilful fingers, and is now hung up as a memorial upon the wall: no, it is an instrument of ten strings still in the minstrel's hand, still filling the temple of the Lord with divine music, which those who have ears to hear delight to listen to. Holy Scripture is an Eolian harp, through which the blessed wind of the Spirit is always sweeping and creating mystic music, such as no man's ears shall hear elsewhere, nor hear even there indeed, unless they have been opened by the healing touch of the Great Physician. The Holy Spirit is in the word, and it is, therefore, living truth. O Christians, be ye sure of this, and because of it make you the word your chosen weapon of war.

II. Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us TO WHAT USES TO PUT THIS "IT IS WRITTEN." Notice first that he used it to *defend his sonship*. The fiend said, "If thou be the Son of God," and Jesus replied, "It is written." That was the only answer he deigned to give. He did not call to mind evidences to prove his Sonship; he did not even mention that voice out of the excellent glory which had said, "This is my beloved Son." No, but "It is written." Now, my dear young brother, converted but newly, I do not doubt but that you have been already subjected to that infernal "if." Oh, how glibly it comes from Satan's lip. It is his darling word, the favourite arrow of his quiver. He is the prince of sceptics, and they worship him while he laughs in his sleeve at them, for he believes and trembles. One of his greatest works of mischief is to make men doubt. "If"—with what a sneer he whispers this already in the ear of the newly-converted. "If," says he—"if." "You say you are justified and pardoned, and accepted;

but if! "May you not after all be deceived?" Now, dear friends, I beseech you never let Satan get you away from the solid ground of the word of God. If he once gets you to think that the fact of Christ being the Saviour of sinners can only be proved by what you can see within yourself he will very soon plunge you into despair. The reason why I am to believe in Jesus, lies in Jesus and not in me. I am not to say, "I believe in the Lord Jesus because I feel so happy," for within half an hour I may feel miserable; but I believe in Christ for salvation, because it is written, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." I believe in the salvation provided by Jesus Christ, not because it comports with my reason or suits my frame of mind, but because it is written, "He that believeth in him is not condemned," "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth in me hath everlasting life." Nothing can alter this truth, it stands, and must stand for ever. Believer, abide by it, come what may. Satan will tell you "You know there are many evidences; can you produce them?" Tell him to mind his own business. He will say to you, "You know how imperfectly you have behaved, even since your conversion." Tell him that he is not so wonderfully perfect that he can afford to find fault with you. If he says, "Ah, but if you were really a changed character you would not have those thoughts and feelings"; argue not at all with him, but dwell upon the fact that it is written, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." If you believe in him, you cannot perish, but you have everlasting life, for so it is written. "It is written," stand you there, and if the devil were fifty devils in one, he could not overcome you. On the other hand, if you leave "It is written," Satan knows more about reasoning than you do, he is far older, has studied mankind very thoroughly, and knows all our sore points, therefore the contest will be an unequal one. Do not argue with him, but wave in his face the banner "It is written." Satan cannot endure the infallible truth, for it is death to the falsehood of which he is the father. So long as God's word is true, the believer is safe; if that is overthrown our hope is lost, but, blessed be God, not till then. Flee ye to your stronghold, ye tempted ones.

Our Lord next used the Scripture to *defeat temptation*. He was tempted to distrust. There lay stones at his feet, for all the world like loaves; there was no bread, and he was hungry, and distrust said, "God has left you; you will starve; therefore leave off being a servant, become a master, and command that these stones be made bread." Jesus, however, met the temptation distrustfully to provide for himself by saying, "It is written." Now, young Christians or old Christians, you may be placed by providence where you think you will be in want, and then if you are afraid that God will not provide for you, the dark suggestion will arise, "I will deal after the way of the unjust, and so put myself in comfortable circumstances." True, the action would be wrong, but many would do it, and therefore Satan whispers, "Necessity has no law; take the opportunity now before you." In such an hour foil you the foe with "It is written, thou shalt not steal." We are bidden never to go beyond or defraud our neighbour. It is written, "Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and

verily thou shalt be fed." It is written, "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." In that way only can you safely meet the temptation to distrust.

Then Satan tempted the Lord to presumption. "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down," said he; but Christ had a Scripture ready to parry his thrust. Many are tempted to presume. "You are one of God's elect, you cannot perish; you may therefore go into sin; you have no need to be so very careful, since you cannot fall finally and fatally,"—so Satan whispers, and it is not always that the uninstructed convert is ready to answer the base sophistry. If we are at any time tempted to yield to such specious special pleadings, let us remember it is written, "watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." It is written, "Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." It is written, "Be ye holy, for I am holy. Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Begone, Satan, we dare not sin because of the mercy of God; that were indeed a diabolical return for his goodness; we abhor the idea of sinning that grace might abound.

Then will Satan attack us with the temptation to be traitors to our God and to worship other gods. "Worship me," says he, "and if thou do this thy reward shall be great." He sets before us some earthly object which he would have us idolise, some selfish aim which he would have us pursue. At that time our only defence is the sure word, "It is written, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength." "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." "Little children keep yourselves from idols." Quoting such words as those with all our hearts, we shall not be suffered to fall. Beloved, we must keep from sin. If Christ has indeed saved us from sin, we cannot bear the thought of falling into it. If any of you can take delight in sin, you are not the children of God. If you are the children of God you hate it with a perfect hatred, and your very soul loathes it. To keep you from sin, arm yourselves with this most holy and pure word of God, which shall cleanse your way, and make your heart obedient to the voice of the thrice-holy God.

Next our Lord used the word as a *direction to his way*. This is a very important point. Too many direct their ways by what they call providences. They do wrong things and they say, "It seemed such a providence." I wonder whether Jonah, when he went down to Joppa to flee to Tarshish, considered it a providence that a ship was about to sail. If so, he was like too many now-a-days, who seek to lay their guilt upon God by declaring that they felt bound to act as they did, for providence suggested it. Our Lord was not guided as to what he should do by the circumstances around him. Any one but our holy Lord would have obeyed the tempter, and then have said, "I was very hungry, and I was sitting down in the wilderness, and it seemed such a providence that a spirit should find me out and courteously suggest the very thing that I needed, viz., to turn the stones into bread." It was a providence, but it was a testing providence. When you are tempted to do evil to relieve your necessities, say to yourself,

"This providence is testing me, but by no means indicates to me what I ought to do ; for my rule is, 'It is written.'" If you make apparent providence your guide, you will make a thousand mistakes, but if you follow "It is written" your steps will be wisely ordered.

Neither are we to make our special gifts and special privileges our guide. Christ is on the pinnacle of the temple, and it is possible, nay, it is certain, that if he had chosen to cast himself down he could have safely done so ; but he did not make his special privileges a reason for presumption. It is true that the saints shall be kept : final perseverance I believe to be undoubtedly the teaching of God's word : but I am not to presume upon a doctrine, I am to obey the precept. For a man to say "I am a child of God, I am safe, therefore I live as I list," would be to prove that he is no child of God at all, for the children of God do not turn the grace of God into licentiousness. It were only according to the devil's logic to say, "I am favoured more than others, and therefore I may provoke the Lord more than they." "It is written we love him because he first loved us, and by this we know that we love God, if we keep his commandments."

Then Satan tried to make his own personal advantage our Lord's guide. "All these things will I give thee," said he, but Christ did not order his acts for his own personal advantage, but replied, "It is written." How often have I heard people say, "I do not like to remain in a church with which I do not agree, but my usefulness would be quite gone if I were to leave it." On this system, if our Lord had been a mere man he might have said, "If I fall down and perform this small act of ritualism I shall have a noble sphere of usefulness. All the kingdoms of the earth will be mine ! There are all those poor oppressed slaves ; I could set them free. The hungry and the thirsty, how would I supply their wants ; and with me for a King earth would be happy. Indeed, that is the very thing I am about to die for, and if it is to be done so easily, and in a trice, by bowing the knee before this spirit, why not do it ?" Far, far removed was our Lord from the wicked spirit of compromise. Alas, too many now say, "We must give and take in little points ; it is of no use to stand out and to be so absurdly wedded to your own ideas ; there is nothing like yielding a little to carry your point in greater things." Thus many talk now-a-days, but not so spoke our Lord. Though the whole world would be at his disposal if he did but once bow his head before the fiend, he would not do it. "It is written" was his guide ; not his usefulness or personal advantage. My dear brother, it will sometimes happen that to do the right thing will appear to be most disastrous ; it will shipwreck your fortune and bring you into trouble, but I charge you do the right thing at any cost. Instead of your being honoured and respected, and accounted a leader in the Christian church, you will be regarded as eccentric, and bigoted, if you speak straight out ; but speak straight out, and never mind what comes of it. You and I have nothing to do with what becomes of us, or our reputations, or with what becomes of the world, or becomes of heaven itself ; our one business is to do our Father's will. "It is written" is to be our rule, and with dogged obstinacy, as men call it, but with resolute consecration as God esteems it, through the mire and through the slough,

through the flood and through the flame, follow Jesus and the word infallible. Follow the written word wholly, and never mar the perfection of your obedience to him on account of usefulness, or any other petty plea, which Satan would put in your way.

Note, further, that our Lord used "It is written" for *maintaining his own Spirit*. I love to think of the calmness of Christ. He is not one whit flurried. He is hungry, and he is told to create bread, and he answers, "It is written." He is lifted to the temple's summit, but he says, "It is written," just as calmly as you or I might do sitting in an easy chair. There he is with the whole world beneath his feet, gazing on its splendour, but he is not dazzled. "It is written" is still his quiet answer. Nothing makes a man self-contained, cool, and equal to every emergency like always falling back upon the infallible Book, and remembering the declaration of Jehovah, who cannot lie. I charge you, brethren, see to this.

The last thought on this point is that our Lord teaches us that the use of Scripture is to *vanquish the enemy and chase him away*. "Go," said he to the fiend, "for it is written." You too shall chase away temptation if you keep firmly to this, "God hath said it, God hath promised it; God that cannot lie, whose very word of grace is strong as that which built the skies."

III. As our Lord chose the weapon, and taught us its uses, so HE SHOWED US HOW TO HANDLE IT. How are we to handle this sword of "It is written"? First, *with deepest reverence*. Let every word that God has spoken be law and gospel to you. Never trifle with it; never try to evade its force or to change its meaning. God speaks to you in this book as much as if again he came to the top of Sinai and lifted up his voice in thunder. I like to open the Bible and to pray, "Lord God, let the words leap out of the page into my soul, thyself making them vivid, quick, powerful, and fresh to my heart." Our Lord himself felt the power of the word. It was not so much the devil who felt the power of "It is written" as Christ himself. "No," saith he, "I will not command stones to be made bread; I trust in God who can without bread sustain me. I will not cast myself down from the temple; I will not tempt the Lord my God. I will not worship Satan, for God alone is God." The manhood of Christ felt an awe of the word of God, and so it became a power to him. To trifle with Scripture is to deprive yourself of its aid. Reverence it, I beseech you, and look up to God with devout gratitude for having given it to you.

Next *have it always ready*. Our Lord Jesus Christ as soon as he was assailed had his answer prepared—"It is written." A ready reckoner is an admirable person in a house of business; and a ready textuary is a most useful person in the house of God. Have the Scriptures at your fingers' end; better still, have them in the centre of your heart. It is a good thing to store the memory with many passages of the Word—the very words themselves. A Christian ought no more to make a mistake in quoting a text of Scripture, than a classic does when he quotes from Virgil or Homer. The scholar likes to *give the ipsissima verba*, and so should we, for every word is precious to us. Our Saviour knew so much of Holy Scripture that out of 76

single book, the book of Deuteronomy, he obtained all the texts with which he fought the wilderness battle. He had a wider range, for the Old Testament was before him; but he kept to one book, as if to let Satan know that he was not short of ammunition. If the devil chose to continue the temptation, the Lord had abundant defence in reserve. "It is written" is an armoury wherein do hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. It is not merely one, but a thousand, nay, ten thousand weapons of war. It has texts of every kind, suitable for our aid in every emergency, and effectual for repelling every attack. Brethren, study much the Word of God, and have it ready to hand. It is of no use treating the Bible as the fool did his anchor, which he had left at home when he came to be in a storm: have the infallible witness at your side when the father of lies approaches.

Endeavour also to *understand its meaning*, and so to understand it that you can discern between its meaning and its perversion. Half the mischief in the world, and perhaps more, is done, not by an ostensible lie, but by a perverted truth. The devil, knowing this, takes a text of Scripture, clips it, adds to it, and attacks Christ with it; but our Lord did not therefore despise Scripture because the devil himself might quote it, but he answered him with a flaming text right in his face. He did not say "The other is not written, you have altered it;" but he gave him a taste of what "It is written" really was, and so confounded him. Do you the same. Search the Word, get the true taste of it in your mouth, and acquire discernment; so that when you say "It is written," you may not be making a mistake; for there are some who think their creed scriptural, and yet it is not so. Texts of Scripture out of their connection, twisted and perverted, are not "It is written," but the plain meaning of the word should be known and understood. Oh, read the word, and pray for the anointing of the Holy Spirit, that you may know its meaning, for so will you contend against the foe.

Brethren, *learn also to appropriate Scripture to yourselves*. One of the texts our Lord quoted he slightly altered. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." The original text is, "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God." But the singular lies in the plural, and it is always a blessed thing to be able to find it there. Learn so to use Scripture that you take home to yourself all its teaching, all its precepts, all its promises, all its doctrines; for bread on the table does not nourish; it is bread which you eat that will really sustain you.

When you have appropriated the texts to yourself, *stand by them whatever they may cost you*. If to give up the text would enable you to make stones into bread, do not give it up; if to reject the precept would enable you to fly through the air like a seraph, do not reject it. If to go against the word of God would make you emperor of the entire world, do not accept the bribes. To the law and to the testimony, stand ye there. Be a Bible man, go so far as the Bible, but not an inch beyond it. Though Calvin should beckon you, and you esteem him, or Wesley should beckon, and you esteem him, keep to the Scripture, to the Scripture only. If your minister should go astray, pray that he may be brought back again, but do not follow him. Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than this book teaches you, do not, I pray you, give any heed to us—no, not for

a single moment. Here is the only infallibility;—the Holy Ghost's witness in this book.

Remember, lastly, that your Lord at this time was *filled with the Spirit*. "Jesus, being filled with the Spirit," went to be tempted. The word of God, apart from the Spirit of God, will be of no use to you. If you cannot understand a book, do you know the best way to reach its meaning? Write to the author and ask him what he meant. If you have a book to read, and you have got that author always accessible, you need not complain that you do not understand it. The Holy Spirit is come to abide with us for ever. Search the Scriptures, but cry for the Spirit's light, and live under his influence. So Jesus fought the old dragon, "being filled with the Spirit." He smote Leviathan through with this weapon, because the Spirit of God was upon him. Go you with the word of God like a two-edged sword in your hand, but ere you enter the lists pray the Holy Ghost to baptise you into himself, so shall you overcome all your adversaries, and triumph even to the end. May God bless you, for Jesus' sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew iv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—478, 119 (Vers. I.), 262.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 27TH, 1874, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."—Ephesians iii. 8.

THIS is a very remarkable day to me, for, if I am spared to preach this present sermon, I shall have completed twenty years of printed discourses issued week by week.* This will be the last sermon of my twentieth volume, making 1,209 in all. This is by no means a common occurrence; indeed, I have not heard of another case in which for so long a time published discourses have been welcomed by the Christian church, and scattered broadcast over the land. Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day testifying the gospel of Christ Jesus. For this I magnify the name of the Lord, and ask my dear friends associated with me to assist me in the expression of my thankfulness to Almighty God for such special lovingkindness. I could not find even in the rich volume of inspiration any language more expressive of the deep emotions of my soul than the verse which is now before us, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unspeakable riches of Christ." How long or how short the time allotted to my future ministry may be I do not wish to know, whether I shall complete another twenty years or become silent in a few months; but for these twenty years of blessed assistance in the ministration of the gospel of Jesus Christ I must and will adore the name of the Lord, even if never again he should permit me to open my lips in his service. It is enough of mercy for one man to have enjoyed, even if there were no more to follow. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

While we shall consider the verse as Paul's own expression, we shall retain our own hold upon it, and use it very much as a summary of our own emotions.

* For fuller account of the twenty years of sermons, see "Sword and Trowel" for January.

Note from the text that *Paul thought very little of himself*. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints," saith he, "is this grace given." I am sure Paul was never guilty of mock modesty, and never pretended to be humbler than he really was. At suitable times he could vindicate himself, and claim his position among his fellow men. If any denied his apostleship, he proved it by abundant arguments. Yea, he even became on one occasion what he calls a "fool in glorying"; he recounted his abundant labours, and his frequent sufferings; he pointed to his success, and protested that he was not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles, though he was nothing. Although all this was true, and Paul expressed only the bare truth, when he thus defended himself, yet in his heart of hearts he chose to take the lowest seat in the lowest room, and because there were no adjectives in correct language which could express his opinion of himself, he did violence to language, and said that he was "less than the least of all saints." His straining of words is not to be censured, for language was made for man, and not man for language, and when within the bounds of grammar a mighty heart cannot express itself, it does well to snap the bonds and let its strength have space to exercise itself. I do not quarrel with Paul's language, but I do dispute his right to push me out of my place. Less than the least is a position which I had hoped to occupy, but he has taken it from me, and I would fain give him a touch on the shoulder and say, "Friend, go up higher"; for as there are no lower seats, and we could not think of sitting above the great apostle, he must allow us to allot him a higher place.

Was Paul really less than the least of all saints? Was not this too low an estimate of himself? Brethren, I suppose he meant that he felt this to be the case when he looked at himself from certain aspects. He was one of the late converts, many of his comrades were in Christ before him, and he yielded precedence to the older ones. He had been aforetime a persecutor and injurious, and, though God had forgiven him, he had never forgiven himself; and when he recollected his share in the sufferings and martyrdom of the saints, he felt that, though now numbered among them, he could only dare to sit in the lowliest place. Besides, any devout man, however eminent he may be in most respects, will find that there are certain other points in which he falls short; and the apostle, instead of looking at the points in which he excelled, singled out with modest eye those qualities in which he felt he failed, and in those respects he put himself down as "less than the least of all saints." This strikes us as being a very different mode of speech from that which is adopted by certain brethren. One friend asserts that he has ceased from known sin for some months; and then another brother, to go a little further, asserts that the very being of sin in him has been destroyed, root and branch; of which I believe in both cases not one single word. If those brethren had said that they were sixteen feet high, that their eyes were solid diamonds, and that their hair was Prussian blue, I should feel towards them very much as I do now. They simply do not know themselves, and the best article of furniture they could have in their houses would be a looking-glass which would let them see their own selves; if they had once had such a sight, I warrant you they would sing another tune, pitched

to a far lower key. Many who now shine in the highest places of self-estimation, will one day be glad enough to sit at the feet of the poorest of the saints, unless I am greatly mistaken ; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased. For my part I had sooner hear Paul say that he was less than the least of all the saints, than I would hear the holiest brother out of heaven say that he had been living without sin. I could believe the one, but I could not believe the other. Paul was as holy as the holiest now upon earth, but among the humble he was the humblest. The Lord make us each so.

Our next remark is, that *Paul thought very much of his brethren*. These two things usually go together—a low opinion of one's self and a high estimate of others. He calls himself less than the least—not of all the apostles, though even that would have been a lowly judgment, but less than the least of all *saints*; and yet there were some very imperfect saints among his acquaintance. His pastoral observation had discovered many weak, trembling, half-instructed, and even backsliding brethren. Remember how he differed from Barnabas about John Mark, and how he rebuked Peter to his face, because he was to be blamed. He was not insensible of the defects of the saints, for in some of his epistles he gives us a very sad picture of the condition of some of the members of the churches; ay, and of some who were true saints: he tells them that he could only write unto them as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ, and that when they ought to have been teachers they needed themselves to be taught the very elements of the faith; and yet he says he was less than the least of them. He must have thought very highly of the least instructed and most imperfect of the divine family. After all, dear brethren, though we hear much fault found with professing Christians and church-members, and hear it said that they are no better than men of the world, we dare not be among their detractors. If we cannot find saints in the church of God, certainly we shall find them nowhere else. They are faulty, no doubt, but still they are the Lord's elect, and the people on whom his heart is set. They are the excellent of the earth, and if we may but be numbered with them we shall be thankful even if our name should stand lowest and last on the list. We count the regenerate and the sanctified to be the true aristocracy, the real nobility of the world. "O God thou art my God, my goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight." The church, notwithstanding her spots, is fairest among women, and though her garments are sometimes stained, (would God they were not), yet for all that she is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold. She is beautiful in the eyes of her Lord, he loved her well enough to redeem her with his precious blood, and to make her his bride; it would be shameful on our part to despise her. She ought to be lovely in our eyes, yea, and she is, for we love the people of God beyond all others. My inmost soul can say of the church of God—

"My soul shall pray for Zion still
While life or breath remains;
There my best friends, my kindred dwell
There God my Saviour reigns."

The next reflection suggested by the text is that *Paul thought very highly of his work*. He says, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach." He looked upon his ministry as a great gift from God, an honour bestowed, a favour granted. Yet, my brethren, Paul's office was not such a very attractive thing after all, looking upon it after the manner of men. Paul was not a Lord Bishop or a right reverend, his salary was less than nothing; he received no homage from men; his greatest gains were his losses, his honours came from his dishonours, and his glory from his sufferings. Stripes and imprisonments awaited him in every city; stoning and shipwreck, perils of robbers and perils of traitors, care and grief, were his portion. He was made an outcast for Christ's sake; his Jewish brethren even foamed at the mouth at the very thought of the renegade Pharisee who preached to the Gentiles. He had suffered the loss of all things for Christ's sake, and he says he "counted them but dung that he might win Christ and be found in him." If the advowson and next presentation of Paul's office had been put up at Garraway's, our modern imitators of Simon Magus would have been very slow in the bidding, they would rather have paid a heavy sum to be excused. Paul himself said of it, "If in this life only we have hope we are of all men most miserable." Yet so contented was he to preach the gospel that, notwithstanding all the hardships and reproaches which went with it, he considered it to be a special favour granted him of the Lord that he was permitted to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles.

The apostle even lifts up his hands in grateful astonishment that so great an honour should be bestowed upon him. He says "Unto *me*—unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that *I*—the persecutor, the man who breathed out threatenings and slaughter—that *I* should preach among the Gentiles." He marvels at it; he cannot make it out; the passage reads as if he paused in his writing, and burst into a song of adoring gratitude because the Lord had honoured him so exceedingly as to put him in trust with the gospel. How deeply do I sympathise with him in his wonder at electing love! My heart cries, "Why me, Lord, why me?"

Note well that the apostle had a very clear view of what he had to do. "That I should preach," says he, "among the Gentiles." Paul does not claim to be sent to regenerate the Gentiles by sprinkling them, to hear their confessions of secret sin, to pry into their private lives with filthy questions, and to absolve them on the fulfilment of appointed penances; he has not a word to say about playing the priest; he does not glory in the grace which enabled him to display a comely ritual, or restore a pompous ceremonialism; he boasts not of carrying a crucifix or a banner in a procession up and down the aisles to delight the Gentiles; nor, in a word, does he set himself up as a sort of demi-god, able to kill and to make alive, to distribute pardons and to regenerate babes. Paul was quite satisfied to preach the Gospel, that was as far as his commission went, and whenever God the Holy Spirit sends forth a minister to bless the Church that is the purport of his mission and nothing else,—he is to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. Neither our Lord nor his apostles command us to set up altars, but the grand

command is "preach the gospel to every creature." O ye priests of the Church of England, take off your tag-rags, and stand out like men and preach the gospel, if indeed ye be ministers of God, and not sappers and miners for the pope of Rome. God sends men to preach the gospel, but he never sends them to intrude into the office of Christ, and set themselves up as priests offering sacrifice for the quick and dead, when in him the priesthood is fulfilled. Paul knew what his vocation was, and he kept to it. Find me one instance of his acting the priest. Wherever he went he was preaching and teaching, preaching and teaching, preaching and teaching, that was the one object of his life; whether in Damascus or Corinth, Jerusalem or Rome, he must preach. When he was amid the Areopagites on Mars' Hill why did he not show them the beauty of divine service as performed in the most approved fashion? Why at Lystra did he not offer a sacrifice to God, and wave a censer?—all the materials were ready. No; but he *preached* everywhere. When detained at Rome he did not train a choir, or instruct a company of clergy in ecclesiastical calisthenics, or Church millinery, but he taught Jesus to all around. We read nothing of his genuflexions and intonations, but a great deal of his preaching the word in season and out of season. This too is our work. The Church must see to it that this ordinance be used above every other for the conversion of men. It pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Stand to your guns, my brethren; preach the word; make full proof of your ministry, and cease not to teach all men the truth concerning Jesus.

Remark how Paul calls his ministry a "grace." Every true preacher of the gospel will have to thank God that he has been permitted to preach. I do not know how my soul would have been kept alive if it had not been for the searching of Scripture, the prayer, the faith, and the joy which preaching has involved. Though it may be true that professional familiarity with sacred things is apt to breed a want of personal enjoyment in them, I do not find it so. To me it is a great blessing to have to prepare for preaching; often the best means of grace to my own soul are the groaning, the pleading, the meditation, and the communion needed for the selection of the right subject upon which to feed your souls. Preachers ought to grow in grace, for their very calling places them at a great advantage, since they are bound to search the Scriptures, and to be much in prayer. It is a choice mercy to be permitted to preach the gospel. I wish some of you would be ambitious of it, for earnest preachers are wanted. There are several brethren here who ought to preach, and I believe they would preach with great power if they were once driven to the attempt. A modesty which may be cowardice silences many; a diffidence, which may also be culpable love of ease, keeps them back from speaking in the name of the Lord. Brethren, let it be so no longer.

Thus, you see, Paul thought little of himself, much of his brethren, and highly of his work.

Again, *Paul thought very lovingly of his congregation.* He counted it a great grace that he was permitted to preach *among the Gentiles*. Peter had a much more respectable sphere, for he was the apostle of the circumcision, and preached to the ancient aristocratic race of the Hebrews;

Because of the riches of his love, he is not ashamed to call his redeemed ones brethren. It is a wonderful subject, the wealth of pure manhood which dwelt in Jesus, for he both thought, and spake, and acted as man, with a richness of perfect manhood which never dwelt in any other son of man. He was the true Adam—the sum of humanity's best glory, made to have dominion over all the works of Jehovah's hands. Thus in the two natures which make up his mysterious person, Son of man and Son of God, there was a measureless wealth, and this Paul preached.

My brethren, I boldly appeal to you whether during these twenty years I have not tried to set forth the unsearchable riches of my Lord and Master in his blessed person. I have preached him to you as no mere abstraction, but as a real Christ. I have not talked of him as if he were a myth, I have spoken of him always as an actual personage, who lived and died, and is risen and gone into heaven. I have also preached him as still amongst you in spirit, Head of the church, and Lord over all. Neither have I preached to you a Christ stunted in power or glory. I have endeavoured, according to my ability, to set him forth as King of kings and Lord of lords. Your hearts have rejoiced to hear concerning him, and mine has rejoiced to speak of one so altogether lovely, so good, so kind, so ready to forgive, so faithful, and mighty. In a word, I have preached the unsearchable riches of his person.

Next, we have to preach the riches of our Lord Jesus *as the Christ*; that is to say, in his relationship towards us. Now, think a minute or two. In the old eternity, or ever the earth was, the unsearchable riches of Christ were displayed when he entered into covenant with the Father on our behalf. What matchless love it was which prompted the second person of the Divine Unity to become the surety of the covenant of grace for his elect. Unsearchable were the riches of love which suggested the covenant, and the riches of the wisdom which planned it. It was worthy of a God.

Remember, that as time rolled on his people as they were one by one created were saved simply on the ground of his word and pledge; and if the bare bond of Christ, before he had shed a drop of his blood, was able to save myriads of his elect, what riches there must be in his atonement itself. If his promise to redeem was enough for thousands of years to save multitudes from death and hell, what must be the riches of the finished righteousness and the accomplished substitution?

Think of the riches of Christ's grace from the day of man's fall until the day of his redemption. He saw man in his waywardness, and knew what he would be under the best conditions, yet he did not turn aside from his pledge of love because of the baseness of fallen humanity. He knew that men would prove ungrateful, yet did he resolve to redeem his people. He had throughout those ages an opportunity of estimating what the pangs of death would be, he knew the cost at which he must seek and save the lost; but through those thousands of years such were the riches of his infinite love that he never started back from the compact which he had made, but determined to push on till by his death he had delivered man from sin, and the earth from the curse.

Wealth of mercy! What can transcend this?

Paul thought most of all of his subject. That he had to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ was his highest bliss. The glories of Jesus, whom once he had persecuted, were his one and only theme. All he had to say was contained within the circumference of that word Christ, and all that he aimed at was to glorify his Lord. Neither ceremonies, nor orthodoxies, nor philosophies, nor sects, nor parties did Paul labour for, but he exalted Christ Jesus the Lord. Nor did he feel that his engrossment by one solitary subject restricted him in his thought or speech, for he looked upon his theme as full of riches, riches altogether unsearchable. He had a deep insight into the truth which he had to proclaim, and saw within it veins of precious thought which he could never exhaust, lodes of more than golden treasure which no research could ever fully explore. O to be in this fashion enamoured of the gospel, absorbed in it, and wholly carried away by its charms.

Let us meditate a few minutes upon the unsearchable riches of Christ, which it has been our joy to preach, even as it was Paul's.

Notice, first, that the apostle dwelt much upon *the essential riches of Christ's person*. Beloved, there are unsearchable riches in Christ, for he is by nature "God over all, blessed for ever." Others may make him a mere man, but we behold the unsearchable riches of the Deity in Jesus Christ, "In whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He is the Creator, without whom was not anything made that was made. He is the preserver of all things, and by him all things consist. What riches there must be in him who both makes and sustains the universe by the word of his power. In Jesus Christ all the attributes of God are manifest: the wisdom, the power, the immutability, the truth, the faithfulness, the justice, and love of God are all to be found in the character of Jesus Christ our Lord. Even while he was here on earth, and clothed himself in mortal flesh, the Godhead shone through the veil. The winds knew him and were silent, the waves knew him and kissed his feet; the angels ministered to him and the devils fled before him; diseases were healed, for his touch was omnipotent; the dead lived, for his voice was almighty. He was God even while to mortal eye he was only the carpenter's son. To-day he has put off his servant's garments, and laid aside the towel wherewith he wiped his disciples' feet, and all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth; let us then proclaim his unsearchable riches. Now is he crowned with universal sovereignty, and the government is upon his shoulders, and his name is called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Riches beyond compare belong to him who for our sakes became poor; riches unsearchable, for he is God, and "Who by searching can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Jesus is "very God of very God," and as such we adore him, and glory in the wealth of his nature.

Jesus our Lord is also man, man of the substance of his mother, bone of our bone. And here we may descant upon the wealth of human love which is treasured up in him and manifested to his brethren; his wealth of sympathy with his people, for he has been tempted in all points like as they are; his wealth of discernment, for he knows the secrets of our nature, having worn that nature himself.

millennial bliss, of which may every one of us be partakers? All this shall be because he cometh. There are unsearchable riches in Christ, whether living, dying, rising, dwelling in heaven, or descending a second time to earth. See what a subject Paul had to preach; and we have preached it too. These twenty years our one theme has been Christ Jesus in his relationship to his people, in his everlasting love, in his once-offered, completely-atonement sacrifice, in his pleading before the Father's throne, and in the kingdom which is yet to subdue all things to itself. What a mercy it is to have been privileged to preach all this!

Thirdly and briefly, Paul had preached the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ *in and to his people*. He had told them that Christ had paid their debts, and they were free. How wondrously had he put it—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." We cannot stop to repeat the texts, but Paul had been clear enough upon the point, that the riches of Christ in pardoning sin were unsearchable. He had told the saints that Christ had provided all that could be needed by them between where they were and the gates of heaven, for, said he, "ye are complete in him." "All things are yours, whether things present or things to come." Paul had delighted to dive into the depth of overflowing grace. What a grand swimmer he was in the sea of joy.

He had also told the saints that they might have whatever they asked for in answer to believing prayer. How often had he put it before them that he who spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for them, would also with him freely give them all things. What riches of Christ are found at the mercy seat! He who knows how to draw nigh to God by Jesus Christ will find great store of wealth therein.

He had assured them that the Lord himself was theirs, yea, said he, "all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." He had told them that heaven was theirs, for they had obtained an inheritance in Christ, and were on their way to the glory, every hour bringing them nearer. Truly, if you want to know the deep things of God, you must listen to Paul, for he tells us of the eternity of Christ's love, a love without beginning and without end. He tells us of the immutability of that love, for Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He tells us of the infinity of that love, and delights to declare that it passeth knowledge. In fact, he tells us that God himself is ours, to be our portion for ever. Oh, children of God, if you are straitened, you are not straitened in the preaching of the apostle, you are straitened in yourselves. I venture also to say that in my own preaching I have not knowingly restrained any of the blessings of the covenant of grace, nor spoken lightly of the boons which Jesus gives to his beloved. No, I have delighted to expatiate upon what the Lord has given to his saints, and have bidden believers enjoy the fat things full of marrow which he has provided for them. Happy people to have such a Saviour.

But lastly, the point Paul most rejoiced to preach upon was this—the *unsearchable riches of our Lord towards sinners*, for he says that he preached *among the Gentiles*, the sinners, the unsearchable riches of

Christ. This is the most delightful theme of all, to tell poor sinners that there is an unspeakably rich Saviour. I lament to say that there are brethren who do not preach this among the Gentiles. They have a great deal to say to God's own people, but they have nothing to say to the Gentiles, to the sinners, to the insensible, unquickened sinners, nothing to say to them. I have known them close a sermon by saying "The election hath obtained it, the rest are blinded," and sit down with not a word for those dead in sin. Brethren, we have not so learned Christ; we delight to preach among the *Gentiles* the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery." What have we to say to Gentile sinners? Why, we have to tell them that our Lord Jesus is so rich in grace that he keeps open house all day and all night long, and "Come and welcome" is written over his palace gates. "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." We have to tell you that, though millions of sinners have already come, the banqueting table is as loaded as it ever was; he has as much grace and mercy to distribute as he had eighteen hundred years ago; he is as able to cleanse from sin, as able to justify and to sanctify as he was when first he began his work of mercy. There is no limit to his grace to those that come to him; whosoever cometh to him shall receive eternal salvation. My Master is so rich that he wants nothing from any of you. You need not bring a rag with you, he will cover you from head to foot; you need not bring a mouldy crust, he will give you of the bread of heaven. You need not stop to cleanse away a single spot, he will wash you white as snow. Help from you! Does the sun want help from darkness? Christ wants no help from sinners. Let them come empty-handed, naked, sick, helpless, and believe that he is able to do for them all that they require. I am bold to tell you that my Master's riches of grace are so unsearchable, that he delights to forgive and forget enormous sin; the bigger the sin the more glory to his grace. If you are over head and ears in debt, he is rich enough to discharge your liabilities. If you are at the very gates of hell, he is able to pluck you from the jaws of destruction. No mighty is his mercy, that no case did ever exceed his power to save or ever will.

I will challenge you to a contest with regard to my dear Lord and Master, that if you will sit down and think the best and largest thoughts you can of him, you will not think him to be so good and loving as he really is: if you will try and wish for the largest blessings you can conceive you shall not be able to wish for such blessings as he is prepared to bestow; and if you will open your mouth wide, and make request for the greatest favour that ever human being asked of God or man, you shall not ask for a tenth of what he is prepared to give. Come and try him! Let it be a wrestling match between your wants and Christ's abundance—and see which will win the day. I tell you that as Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the magicians, so my Master's all-sufficiency will swallow up all the demands of your dreadful necessities. Only come and try him now! All that you want between the gates of hell and the gates of heaven you shall find in Christ, and you shall have it all for nothing, all for the asking for. Open your hand and take it, it is all he asks

of you, that you believingly receive what he freely bestows ; trust in him, in him as dead and risen, and ascended, and reigning ; rely upon him, and by so doing you shall find that there are unsearchable riches of grace in him.

Now, I have done when I have said just this. I have no doubt Paul would not have been so pleased to preach Christ as he was unless something had come of it. Now, at the close of twenty years of printed sermons, my great delight in having preached the unsearchable riches of Christ lies in this, that something has come of it. How many souls have been converted it is not in my power to tell. I do not think I ever pass a single day, nor have done so for some years, without having intimations of some persons at the very ends of the earth, or at home, having been led to the Saviour by the reading of the sermons. I am not prepared to say how many persons have gone through this church to other churches or to heaven; the number can hardly be far short of those which remain, and of these it may suffice to say that four thousand seven hundred souls are with us, still kept by the power of grace, and knit together in church fellowship. Is not this matter of great thankfulness to God? During these twenty years the dew has never ceased to fall, the church has been planted like a tree by rivers of water, she has brought forth her fruit in her season, and whatsoever she has attempted has prospered. I joy, therefore, and will joy in this.

Yet once more I think Paul must have felt an especial gladness that through his preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ others had been raised up to preach it too. So has it been with us. How many tongues this day are preaching Christ, out of our church members and students, I cannot assert definitely, but that they are to be counted by hundreds is certain ; would to God they were ten times as many. I wish all the rest of this congregation who love Christ would go and talk about him too. Some among you are very diligent, and I bless God for you. I wish more of you were trying to bring these unsearchable riches of Christ within the knowledge of the ignorant and sinful. It is the last Sabbath of the year. Could we not begin next year with a great deal more industry than we have shewn last year? I am afraid there are many members who have no work to do for Jesus, and these are the sort of people to backslide. You that have neither to do nor to suffer are the baggage of the army, the impedimenta which prevent the host from marching on to victory. Bestir yourselves, feed upon Jesus, and then take of the good cheer to those who do not know the riches of Christ, and as God gives you grace, go you and fulfil this ministry, and you will then say, as I do, and as the apostle said of old, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." The Lord bless you. Amen.

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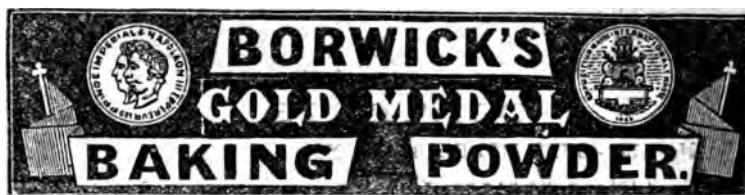
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Case of Mr. F. Y. SPROD, 40, Old Market Street, Bristol.

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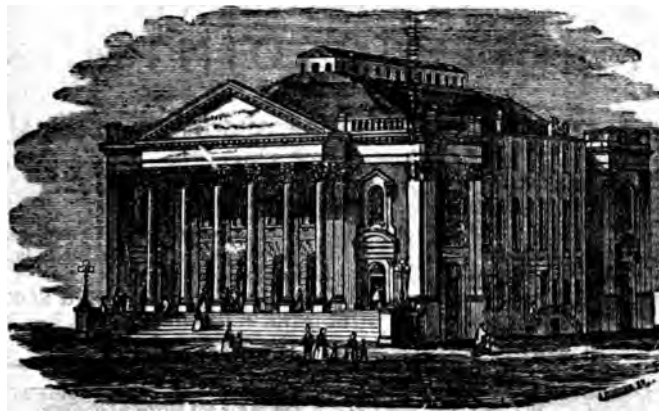
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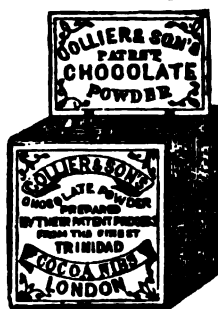
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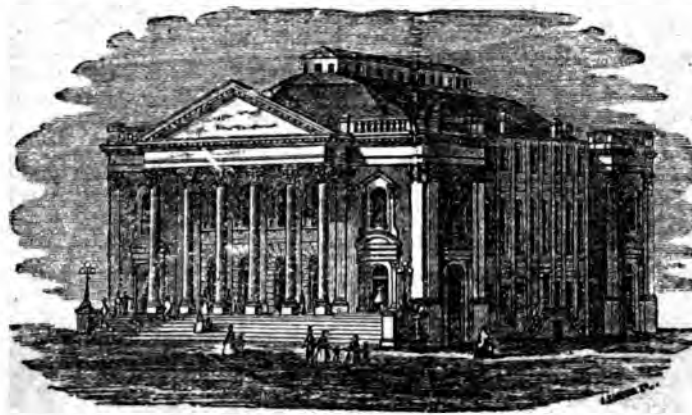
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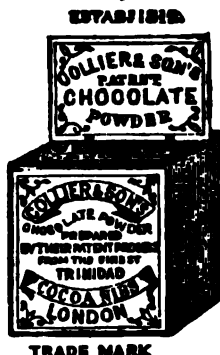
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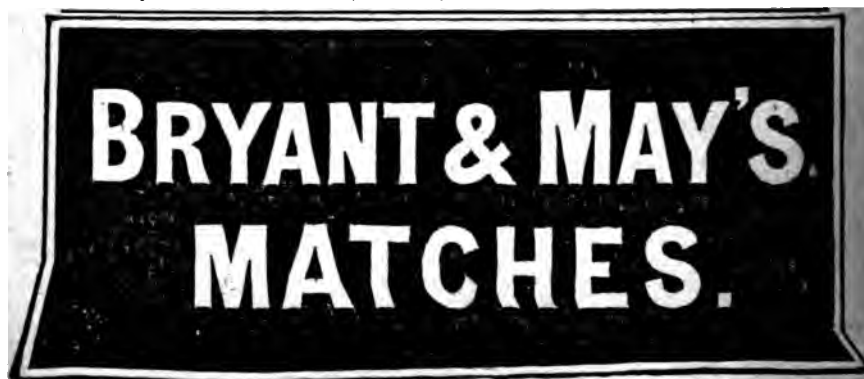
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Commercial Steam Mills, London.

Established 1813.

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229.

MAY 31, 1874.

Price 6d.

THE
Metropolitan Tabernacle
Pulpit.
CONTAINING
SERMONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.



CONTENTS.

- No. 1,170.—"BY ALL MEANS SAVE SOME."
1,171.—THE LORD CHIDING HIS PEOPLE.
1,172.—THE SAVIOUR YOU NEED.
1,173.—"I THOUGHT."
1,174.—THE EAR BORED WITH AN AUL.

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230.

JUNE 30, 1874.

Price 6d.

THE
Metropolitan Tabernacle
Pulpit.
CONTAINING
SERMONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.



CONTENTS.

- No. 1,175.—STEPHEN'S DEATH.
1,176.—THE ETERNAL DAY.
1,177.—FEARFUL OF COMING SHORT.
1,178.—GLORYING IN THE LORD.
1,179.—FORTY YEARS.

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231.

JULY 31, 1874.

Price 6d.

THE
Metropolitan Tabernacle
Pulpit.
CONTAINING
SERMONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.



CONTENTS.

- No. 1,180.—JESUS NEAR BUT UNRECOGNISED.
1,181.—THINKING AND TURNING.
1,182.—A SINGULAR TITLE AND A SPECIAL FAVOUR.
1,183.—IS CONVERSION NECESSARY?
1,184.—THE SAD PLIGHT AND SURE RELIEF.

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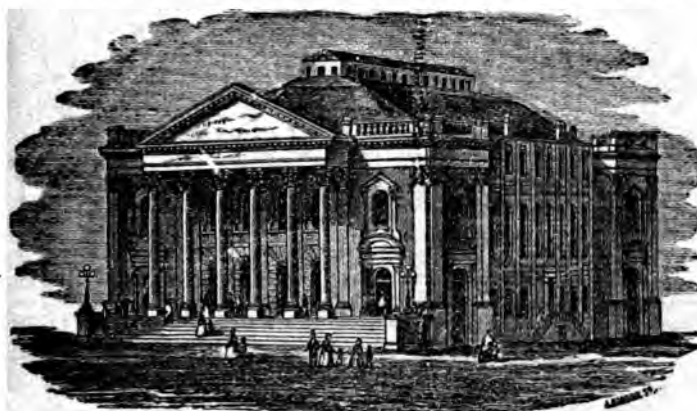
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232.

AUGUST 31, 1874.

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CONTAINING
SERMONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.



CONTENTS.

No. 1,185.—AN EARNEST WARNING AGAINST LUKE-
WARMNESS.

1,186.—THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT.

1,187.—THE THREE WITNESSES.

1,188.—A WORD FOR THE PERSECUTED.

1,189.—THE TURNING POINT.

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233.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1874.

Price 6d.

THE
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Pulpit.
CONTAINING
SERMONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.



CONTENTS.

- No. 1,190.—A SONG AMONG THE LILIES.
1,191.—FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE?
1,192.—HINDRANCES TO PRAYER.
1,193.—GIRDING ON THE HARNESS.
1,194.—“I AND THE CHILDREN.”

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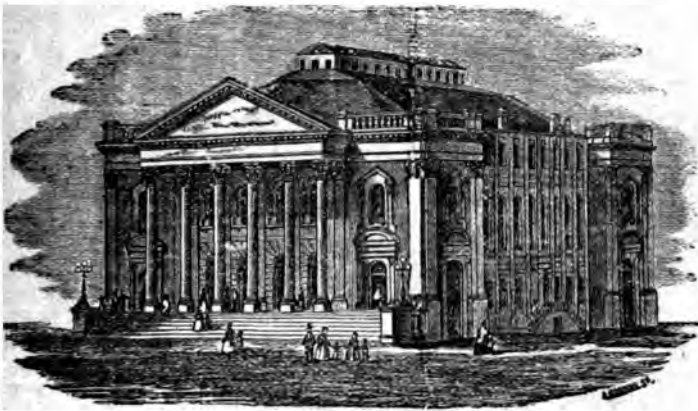
THE

Metropolitan Tabernacle

Pulpit.

CONTAINING

SERMONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.



CONTENTS.

No. 1,195.—ABUNDANT PARDON.
1,196.—THE STERN PEDAGOGUE.
1,197.—THE CLAIMS OF GOD.
1,198.—THE MASTER.
1,199.—THE AGONY IN GETHSEMANE.

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BRYANT & MAY'S MATCHES.

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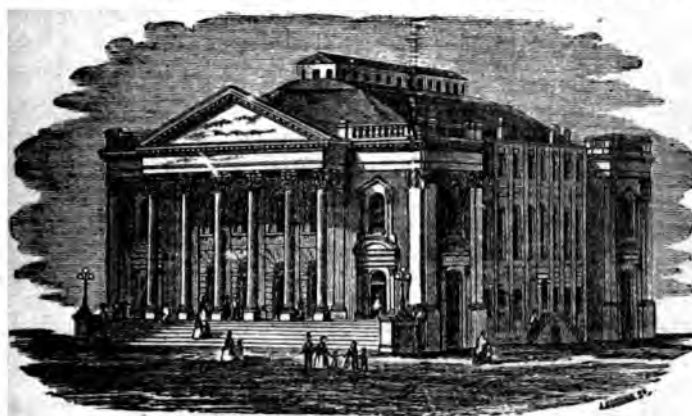
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235.

NOVEMBER 30, 1874.

Price 6d.

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Pulpit.
CONTAINING
SERMONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.



CONTENTS.

- No. 1,200.—THE POWER OF THE RISEN SAVIOUR.
1,201.—PROVIDENCE—AS SEEN IN THE BOOK OF
ESTHER.
1,202.—HOLY WATER.
1,203.—THE CONSECRATION OF PRIESTS.
1,204.—THE RECEPTION OF SINNERS.

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BROWN AND POLSON'S CORN FLOUR
CANNOT BE SURPASSED.

Every Genuine Packet bears the fac-simile signatures of the Makers,

John Brown

John Polson

KEEP A THING SEVEN YEARS, AND YOU WILL FIND A USE FOR IT.



AT THIS SEASON PARR'S LIFE PILLS are used by THOUSANDS. They clear from the body all hurtful impurities, and promote a regular and healthy action of the Liver and Bowels.

PERSONS SUFFERING from HEADACHE, INDIGESTION, Pains in the Shoulders and the Back, Gout, Rheumatism, and General Debility, are particularly recommended to try PARR'S LIFE PILLS. They have never been known to fail in affording immediate relief.

PARR'S LIFE PILLS have been made known to the Public above Forty Years, and have acquired the confidence of all who have ever made trial of them. As a proof of the long-standing repute of this justly valued Medicine, the following letters are taken from many others, and now re-published:—

"To the Proprietors of PARR'S LIFE PILLS.

"GENTLEMEN,—Were I to enumerate all the cures and benefits obtained by taking this famous remedy (and are offered to me), it would require a book as large as a Church Bible to write them in! Not a day passes but some one comes to acknowledge the blessings of a cure—some being made free in their limbs from pain and rheumatism, some cured of sick headache of long standing, some from violent bilious attacks, others cured of the ague, of swelled legs, and sore legs—for curing the palpitation of the heart, and, wonderful to relate! old men and women say, since they took OLD PARR'S PILLS, they have enjoyed better health, better spirits, better appetite, had more nerve and strength than they had experienced for the last twenty years, and that Old Parr is like new life to them, for they feel all those delightful changes in the system. In fact, these wonderful Pills appear to contain all the virtues of the 'pothecary's shop without having to go through all the regular course of draughts and boluses.

"My sale, instead of decreasing, increases. Since last August, when I received the first supply of PARR'S LIFE PILLS (with the four gross you may now send me by first conveyance), I have had 2076 boxes at 1s. 14d., and 264 of the 2s. 9d. size. Some people may not believe this: you can, if you like, show the entry, and the cash paid for them.—I am, your obedient servant,

"JAMES DRURY.

"224, Stone-bow, Lincoln,
Feb. 1, 1841."

From Mr. J. S. CLARKE, of Peterborough.

Peterborough, March 27th, 1841.

"GENTLEMEN,—During the last fortnight I have sold nearly one hundred boxes of PARR'S LIFE PILLS, and the good effects produced by them have been most astounding. One person who has been many years dreadfully afflicted with a scorbutic complaint, stated that he felt certain, from the good that they had already done him, that if he could only remain quietly at home, instead of being obliged to go to work, they would completely cure him. Another person, who had a bad knee, said they had done her more good than all the doctors. In fact, I have no hesitation in saying that I could with ease obtain a dozen more such cases, with the names and addresses of the parties.

I remain, gentlemen, yours respectfully.

"J. S. CLARKE."

From MRS. MARY BURNS, Dundee.

Dundee, Nov. 20th, 1841.

"DEAR SIR,—I enclose you a post office order in payment for the PARR'S LIFE PILLS received yesterday. They are all gone already save three boxes, and they are doing an incredible deal of good in this quarter, in town and country. Please to send me another supply by the steamer on Wednesday, and I should feel obliged if you would at the same time send some of the large size, as numbers of people have been asking for them. Send them to the wharf on Tuesday night so that they may not be too late, for if we should be out of them as we have been this week the people will go mad!—Yours truly,

"MARY BURNS.

"Mr. E. Edwards, St. Paul's-yard, London.

"P.S.—Do do not forget to send them to the Steamer on Tuesday night."

MARRY YOUR SON WHEN YOU WILL, AND YOUR DAUGHTER WHEN YOU CAN.

TAKE HELP OF MANY, COUNSEL OF FEW.—HE THINKS OF EVERYTHING WHO HAS TO LOOK SHARP AFTER HIS DAILY BREAD.

DO NOT PUT ALL YOUR EGGS IN ONE BASKET, NOR RISK YOUR WHOLE FORTUNE IN ONE VENTURE.

ONCE A USE AND EVER A CUSTOM.

VALUABLE LETTER FROM MRS. LUCY COLLINS.

No. 3, Lower-terrace, Notting-hill, W., London, March 2, 1874.

GENTLEMEN,—It has often been on my mind to write to you to thank you for your excellent medicine, PARR'S LIFE PILLS, which have been of the greatest benefit to me. It is fully twenty years since I first took this medicine, when I was afflicted with those ailments peculiar to women. I received immediate relief and speedy enjoyment of good health, which I have enjoyed now for the past twenty years; and I now declare to you that I have never taken any other medicine. I write this letter simply to express to you my gratitude, but if you think its publication in the newspapers will lead other young persons to benefit from my experience you have my permission to publish it.—I am, Gentlemen, yours very respectfully.

LUCY COLLINS.

14, North Cross-street, Gosport, October 16th, 1872.

DEAR SIR,—About five or six years ago I was very ill, suffering from boils of the painful and dangerous kind called carbuncular boils, and no medicine which I took gave me relief, till a friend of mine advised me to try PARR'S LIFE PILLS; but I would not do so for some time, as I had no faith that they could do me good, but my friend becoming more urgent, I, to satisfy him, tried these Pills, and soon found so much benefit that I determined to persevere, and thankful I am that I did so, for the result is a perfect cure. I have never been troubled since, and an occasional dose keeps me in capital good health.—I am, Gentlemen, yours respectfully and gratefully.

J. CARSWELL.

Messrs. T. ROBERTS and Co., 8, Crane-court, Fleet-street, E.C.

MR. HUGH WOODNEY, Tibb-lane, King-street, Manchester.

Says, "PARR'S PILLS appear to contain the invaluable properties of a tonic and restorative medicine, and at the same time are an effectual preventive against costiveness, without weakening the nervous system."

MRS. ELIZA ALLEN, Crown-street, Brentwood, Essex.
Says, "I have suffered for a long time from pains in my back and kidneys, and at times I could not stand upright. A few months ago I was induced to try PARR'S LIFE PILLS, and soon got quite well; and I have ever since enjoyed excellent health.—April 4th, 1866."

MRS. JANE READ, Clement-street, Manchester.
Says, "I have been ill for about fifteen months; my symptoms were pain and tenderness of the epigastrium, especially in its left half, and the pain was always increased by taking food. I had constant nausea, heat in the stomach and up to the throat, frequent retching, and sometimes vomiting, and often sobbing and laughing. I tried many remedies for the inflammation of the stomach just described, but all failed until I took PARR'S LIFE PILLS. The relief was then immediate. I am now perfectly well, and free from hysteria, after taking two small boxes, according to the printed directions given with the medicine.—Oct. 5th, 1866."

MR. JOHN HYAM, West Stockwell-street, Colchester.
Says, "About two years ago I suffered very much from ill-health, which I was told was caused by indigestion. I was persuaded to try PARR'S LIFE PILLS, and I am most thankful to say they gave me immediate relief. I have not taken any other kind of medicine, and I have been blessed ever since with excellent good health.—March 6, 1866."

IMPORTANT LETTER FROM DUBLIN.

8, South Cumberland-street, Dublin.

August 15th, 1874.

GENTLEMEN,—It is with much pleasure I inform you of the great benefit which, through the Divine blessing, I have derived from the use, for a few months, of PARR'S LIFE PILLS. I assure you that when I commenced taking them I was in a very reduced state of health; in fact, my friends feared I was going, or had gone, into decline. To add to my misfortune I caught a severe cough last winter, which threatened to take me away. God, as I firmly believe, directed me to your world-famed medicine. A few doses relieved my cough, a few more completely removed it; and I have continued from that time (last March) up to the present to use PARR'S LIFE PILLS by doing which, I rejoice to say, I am completely cured of the ill-health from which I for some two years suffered. My digestive powers are improved, my muscles and nerves are strengthened, and my complexion has recovered the bloom of health. I shall never be without a supply of the pills all through my life.—I am, Gentlemen, with deep gratitude, your obedient servant,

ROBT. MCKENNY.

Messrs. T. Roberts and Co.

MR. J. GAMIS, Yeovil, Somersetshire, Feb. 5th, 1868.

Says "that in some villages in his neighbourhood they repudiate all other medicine." "The following testimonials to the efficacy of PARR'S LIFE PILLS were communicated to me by the persons who had received the benefit. A highly respectable female, who has for many years been a customer at my shop, told me that one box of PARR'S PILLS had done her health and constitution more good than all the medicine she had previously taken. Her health had been much shattered from worms, but the immortal PARR'S medicine had completely destroyed them, and she is now enjoying excellent health. Another instance of their good effect was in the case of a young man who had been unable to work for seven months, and who, by taking two boxes, was enabled to go to his usual employment. A short time since a gentleman, of London, who had been staying in a neighbouring village for change of air, and who was about returning home, called for a 2s. 9d. box of Pills, and told me it was the only medicine that did him any good after all the medical advice he could get (and he had had the best); he further said that a person who had experienced the value of them had recommended them to him, and that it would in future be his family medicine. In fact, in some villages in the neighbourhood they repudiate all other medicine."

"J. GAMIS, Yeovil."

MOST THINGS HAVE TWO HANDLES, AND IT IS WISE TO TAKE HOLD OF THE BEST.

DELAYS ARE DANGEROUS.—WHEN THE POOL HAS MADE UP HIS MIND THE MARKER HAS GONE BY.

THE SWEETEST GRAPES HANG HIGHEST.

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE TO A WILLING MIND.

IMPORTANT & INTERESTING LETTER.

No. 2, Lawn-terrace, North-end, Fulham, November 1st, 1872.

GENTLEMEN,—I read now and then in the newspapers letters speaking of the good qualities of your medicine, PARR'S LIFE PILLS, and I have for a long time had it on my mind to write and tell you that perhaps no one could say more in their favour than I can, because myself and my family have used them as a Family Medicine for upwards of twenty-five years, which is, you must admit, a long experience; and I can now unhesitatingly vouch for their efficacy, and say I believe them to be the finest medicine ever used. Excepting when we were obliged to have a Surgeon, we have never had to call in a medical man, and our continued good health, I attribute to using, when we require medicine, your PARR'S LIFE PILLS.—I am, Gentlemen, yours with respect and gratitude,
Messrs. T. ROBERTS AND CO., 8, Crane-court, Fleet-street, E.C. ALEXANDER FITCH.

17, Walmer-road, Plumstead, Kent.
30th September, 1874.

GENTLEMEN,—For the benefit of my fellow-creatures afflicted in a similar manner to what I have been myself, I send you the following account of my case, hoping that you will publish it, as I think it ought to be made known. Sixteen years ago I was attacked with rheumatism and asthma, and notwithstanding that I tried numerous remedies, also by the advice of Doctors I took Doctors' medicine and used their applications. For a period of fifteen long years I continued to suffer severely, and quite despaired of ever getting better. A twelvemonth ago a Friend recommended me to try PARR'S LIFE PILLS. I procured a box from your agent, Mr. CLARKE, Chemist, 51, Plumstead-road, and, to my great joy, I derived considerable benefit from them. I decided upon giving them a fair trial, and have continued taking them at intervals up to the present time, the result of which is that I am entirely a different man, and, I may say, that with the exception of a little shortness of breath at times, I am perfectly cured. My age is 59 years.

Having gained such immense benefit myself, I make a point of recommending them to others whenever I get the opportunity.

I am, gentlemen, yours much obliged,
WILLIAM HESSEY.
Messrs. Roberts and Co., 8, Crane-court,
Fleet-street, E.C.

GENTLEMEN,—I have great pleasure in testifying to the decided approbation with which many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of my customers continue to speak of PARR'S LIFE PILLS; and, although I have sold tens of thousands of them, I have never heard of a single instance in which they have been otherwise than highly beneficial to the health of man, woman, or child, although I have sold them to persons of all classes and of all ages.

I am, gentlemen, yours truly,
J. NOBLE.
Medicine Warehouse, Boston, Lincolnshire.

To the Proprietor of Parr's Life Pills.

GENTLEMEN,—The use of PARR'S LIFE PILLS has, in a great number of cases which have come under my personal notice, been attended by the most beneficial results in the removal or abatement of the most distressing maladies—in many instances amongst persons whose circumstances rendered it impossible for them to avail themselves of medical treatment, and in many others where medical treatment had been resorted to without avail. It is always satisfactory to know that what one is the means of introducing or circulating is likely to serve the desired purpose; and there is no medicine I can recommend with greater satisfaction or confidence, on account of their tried excellency and efficacy in all respects, than PARR'S LIFE PILLS.

JOHN HEATON, Briggate, Leeds.

Testimony of an eminent Chemist in favour of Parr's Life Pills.

GENTLEMEN,—At the request of several friends, who have introduced PARR'S LIFE PILLS into their families as a medicine, I have submitted them to a strict chemical analysis, in order to ascertain whether they contained any of those active mercurial and other mineral preparations now so commonly introduced into many advertised medicines. I beg to say that I find them worthy of being recommended to the public for their great efficacy and simplicity, and, as stated by the Proprietors, to be really vegetable pills, containing as they do, nothing but what is of vegetable origin.

I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,
JOHN DALE, Analytical Chemist,
Manchester.

42, Trongate, Glasgow.

GENTLEMEN,—It will perhaps be satisfactory for you to know that PARR'S LIFE PILLS still command the largest sale, with me, of any medicine in the Patent catalogue. I almost daily have to listen to the wonders they have done to customers who have been fortunate enough to use them; a great proportion of them have been completely cured of the complaints for which they took them; and a very numerous class declare that they were so pleased with their mildness and mode of action whilst taking them, that they have adopted them as their family aperient.

I am yours, &c., A. SCOTT.

THINK MUCH, SAY LITTLE, WRITE LESS.—TALKING COMES BY NATURE, SILENCE OF UNDERSTANDING.

ALL THINGS COME RIGHT FOR THOSE WHO CAN WAIT.—THE WORLD IS HIS WHO HAS PATIENCE.

HAPPY IS HE WHO IS MADE WARY BY OTHER'S PERILS.

THE FIRST STEP IS THE CHIEF DIFFICULTY.

PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

"I, the undersigned JOHN CUBLEY, late of Derby, but now of the town of Nottingham, heretofore a Schoolmaster, but now out of employment, do hereby acknowledge that I have lately got compounded some Pills, which I have sold to different persons as 'OLD PARR'S LIFE PILLS,' by representing that I had purchased the recipe for that celebrated Medicine; such representation was, however, entirely false, and the proprietors of the genuine OLD PARR'S LIFE PILLS have commenced legal proceedings against me for the above fraud. But I, having expressed sorrow and contrition, and given up to them the names and addresses of each person to whom I have sold any of such Pills, as well as of the Druggists who compounded the same, and agreed to make this public apology, and pay all expenses, including this advertisement, the proprietors have kindly consented to forego such legal proceedings. I do, therefore, declare my shame and sorrow for having committed such an imposition on the public, and such a fraud on the proprietors of OLD PARR'S LIFE PILLS; and further express my acknowledgments for their lenity.—JOHN CUBLEY. Witness, H. B. CAMPBELL, Solicitor, Nottingham.—Dated this 28th day of January, 1841."

PARR'S LIFE PILLS

May be had at all the principal Drug Stores in the East and West Indies, South America, Australia, Cape of Good Hope, New Zealand, &c.

Also from the appointed Agents:

Messrs. FELTON, GRIMWADE, & Co., 125, Russell-street, Melbourne.	Messrs. MARSH & SONS, Cape Town.
Messrs. KEMPTHORNE, PROSSER, & Co., Dunedin.	Mr. E. ASH, 60, Elizabeth-street, Hobart Town.
Messrs. ELLIOTT BROTHERS, Pitt-street, Sydney.	Messrs. YOUNGMAN, Dunedin.
E. and M. KEOGH, Druggists, Melbourne.	Messrs. F. FAULDING & Co., Adelaide.
	T. H. ROBERTS, Gibraltar.

NOTICE.—Round the sides of each box of the genuine medicine is affixed the ENGLISH GOVERNMENT STAMP, on which is engraved the words:—

IN
WHITE LETTERS
ON
RED GROUND.

PARR'S LIFE PILLS

IN
WHITE LETTERS
ON
RED GROUND.

And in order to give the public a still further protection it is considered expedient to affix a fac-simile of the signature of the proprietors of PARR'S LIFE PILLS to the wrapper which is folded round each box. Thus:—

J. Roberts & Co.

CRANE COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON.

Sold by our appointment by all respectable Chemists and Medicine Vendors,

In Boxes, 1s. 1d., 2s. 9d., and in Family Packets, 11s. each.

The boxes at 2s. 9d. contain nearly three small, and those at 11s. contain nearly five at 2s. 9d.

Directions in Spanish, Portuguese, French, and English, are folded round each box when so ordered.

IN THE CANADIAN DOMINION

PARR'S LIFE PILLS ARE SOLD BY THE APPOINTED AGENTS:—

Quebec J. Musson and J. Bowles.	Port Hope C. Brent.
Toronto Nell C. Love.	St. Catherine Mr. Brouse.
Kingston Palmer, Baker, and Co.	Hamilton C. Cartwright.
London Mr. Sims.	Montreal A. Savage and Co.

SUCCESS IN LIFE IS ONLY TO BE WON BY HARD STRIVING.

HE THAT BUYS BY THE PENNYWORTH KEEPS HIS OWN HOUSE AND ANOTHER MAN'S.

HE THAT LABOURS IS TENTED BY ONE DEVIL, HE THAT IS IDLE BY A THOUSAND.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

DR. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S CHLORODYNE.

THE ORIGINAL AND ONLY GENUINE

ADVICE TO INVALIDS.—If you wish to obtain quiet refreshing sleep, free from headache, relief from pain and anguish, to calm and assuage the weary aching of protracted disease, invigorate the nervous media, and regulate the circulating systems of the body, you will provide yourself with that marvellous remedy discovered by Dr. J. COLLIS BROWNE, Member of the College of Physicians, London, to which he gave the name of

CHLORODYNE.

And which is admitted by the Profession to be the most wonderful and valuable remedy ever discovered.

CHLORODYNE is the best remedy known for Coughs, Consumption, Bronchitis, Asthma.

CHLORODYNE effectually checks and arrests those too often fatal diseases—Diphtheria, Fever, Croup, Ague.

CHLORODYNE acts like a charm in Diarrhoea, and is the only specific in Cholera and Dysentery.

CHLORODYNE effectually cuts short all attacks of Epilepsy, Hysteria, Palpitation, and Spasms.

CHLORODYNE is the only palliative in Neuralgia, Rheumatism, Gout, Cancer, Toothache, Meningitis, &c.

From Dr. B. J. BOULTON & Co., Horncastle.

We have made pretty extensive use of Chlorodyne in our practice lately, and look upon it as excellent direct Sedative and Anti-Spasmodic. It seems to allay pain and irritation in whatever organ, and from whatever cause. It induces a feeling of comfort and quietude not obtainable by any other remedy, and it seems to possess this great advantage over all other sedatives, that it leaves no unpleasant after-effects. Earl Russell communicated to the College of Physicians that he had received a dispatch from Her Majesty's Consul at Manilla, to the effect that Cholera had been raging fearfully, and that the ONLY remedy of any service was CHLORODYNE.—See *Lancet*, December 31, 1864.

CAUTION.—BEWARE OF PIRACY AND IMITATIONS.—CAUTION.—Vice-Chancellor Sir W. Page Wood stated that Dr. J. Collis Browne was, undoubtedly, the Inventor of Chlorodyne: that the story of the defendant, Freeman, was deliberately untrue, which, he regretted to say, had been sworn to.—See *Times*, July 13, 1864.

Sold in Bottles at 1s. 1d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. 6d. None genuine without the words, "Dr. J. COLLIS BROWNE'S CHLORODYNE" on the Government Stamp. Overwhelming Medical Testimony accompanies each Bottle.

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J. T. Davenport, 33, Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury, London.

MR. GEO. THOS. CONGREVE'S WORK ON CONSUMPTION,

Its Nature, Symptoms, Stages, and Successful Treatment.

The Experience of many years from Cases in all parts of the Kingdom. Also, containing chapters on the treatment of

ASTHMA, CHRONIC BRONCHITIS, COUGH, &c.

Post-free for 5 stamps, from the Author, COOMBE LODGE, PECKHAM.

NOTICE.—Mr. CONGREVE will see Patients at COOMBE LODGE, on TUESDAY, THURSDAY, and SATURDAY MORNINGS (ONLY) as usual. Country Patients should come on one of the two former days.

RECENT REMARKABLE CASE AT NORWICH.

Communicated by Mr. E. HAYNES, of 7, Moreton St. West, Pimlico, S.W.

In a letter, dated November 3rd, Mr. Haynes writes me relative to the case of Mrs. S. Farrington (his sister), of Norwich, as follows:—"Ten months ago she was suffering from much weakness, loss of appetite, with severe cough. She became in so weak, and so helpless a state she could not wash or dress herself at all. *Change of air was thought by friends the only hope left.* In June she was removed to her parents' home at Wissett, near Halesworth, Suffolk. My wife went down and found her in a perfectly helpless state—so low she could not feed herself or raise herself in bed; all that saw her expected her death very soon. Your medicine was commenced. An improvement soon took place. She kept on with it, and became stronger and stronger, until she could go back home. In a letter received from her to-day she says:—

"I am getting strength, flesh, and spirits, and can now cheerfully attend to the duties of life. I am a living wonder. Since I went to my parents at Wissett I have taken none but Mr. Congreve's medicine, and, *by the will of God, that has restored me.*"

"My desire is, Dear Sir, that you may be encouraged, &c., &c., &c.,

EDWARD HAYNES."

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INKSTANDS, Mounted, 7s. 6d.
BOOK SLIDES, Mounted, 5s. 6d.
WORK BOXES, 7s. 6d. to 2 Guineas.
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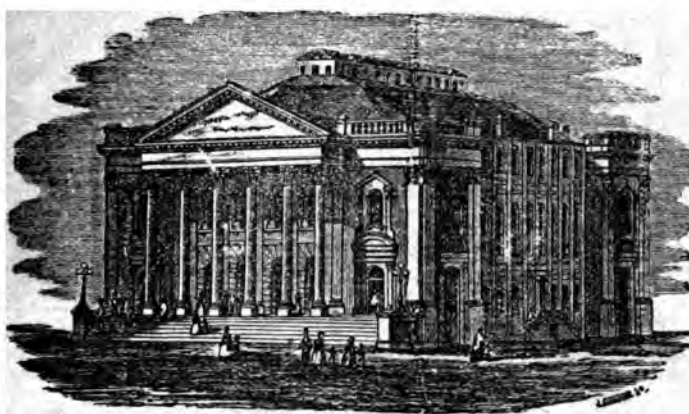
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